

Israel and Hamas: The Chances of Peace

Prof Dr Mária Bordás PhD¹, János Tomolya PhD²

¹Full professor of the National University of Public Service in Budapest

²Retired COL of the Hungarian Army

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100500624>

Received: 10 May 2026; Accepted: 15 May 2026; Published: 09 June 2026

ABSTRACT

At the time of writing, the world's attention is focused on the US-Iran-Israeli conflict, and little media attention is given to Gaza, where military clashes continue despite the peace agreement signed by Donald Trump on October 13, 2025. The conflict has not ended; it has only reached a lower level of intensity.

This study examines the obstacles to a lasting settlement of the Gaza conflict, with particular attention to Hamas's ideology, the geopolitical specificities of the region, and the internal Palestinian political divisions. The authors present Hamas's armed activities from its founding in 1987 to 2025, emphasizing the cyclical reproduction of violence, characterized by regularly violated ceasefires, rocket attacks, and Israeli military responses. The analysis highlights the strategic significance of the attack on October 7, 2023, and its impact on the dynamics of the conflict.

The objective of this study is to present the factors that, in the current political situation, exclude the chances of a lasting peace in the Gaza Strip. In order to achieve the above-mentioned objective, the thesis methodologically applies the methods of geopolitical, security policy, and conflict psychology approaches.

The study argues that the economic collapse of the Gaza Strip, its demographic structure, and Hamas's religious-ideological radicalism create a structural environment that hinders peaceful political development. In addition, the Fatah-Hamas rivalry delegitimizes the Palestinian representational system, making a negotiated settlement impossible. The authors conclude that under the current circumstances, there is a chance that the reconciliation process will continue or stall. Reconciliation requires a very strong political will on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

Keywords: Hamas, Israel, terrorism, two-state solution

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing armed conflict between Israel and Hamas has a history of several decades. The violence that flares up again and again in the Gaza Strip has been one of the sharpest and bloodiest points of the Middle East conflict for decades. Ceasefires and humanitarian aid operations following armed conflicts have consistently failed to bring about lasting peace, providing only a temporary pause before the next escalation.

While international media attention often focuses on the immediate causes of tension (e.g., border incidents, rocket attacks, military retaliation), the thesis of this study is that the reason for the failure to achieve peace in the Gaza conflict is much deeper: a complex As of this writing, the world's attention is focused on the US-Iran-Israeli conflict, and little media attention is directed at Gaza, where military clashes continue despite the peace agreement signed by Donald Trump on October 13, 2025.

The conflict has not ended; it has only reached a lower level of intensity. This study examines the obstacles to a lasting settlement of the Gaza conflict, with particular attention to Hamas ideology, the geopolitical specificities of the region, and the internal political divisions in Palestine. It also highlights the current internal political divisions in Israel, as well as the anti-reconciliation views of extremist trends in the politics of the ruling parties.

The authors present Hamas's armed activities from its founding in 1987 to 2025, emphasizing the cyclical reproduction of violence, characterized by regularly violated ceasefires, rocket attacks, and Israeli military responses. The current paper highlights the strategic significance of the October 7, 2023, attack and its impact on the dynamics of the conflict. According to the study, the economic collapse of the Gaza Strip, its demographic structure, and the religious-ideological radicalism of Hamas create a structural environment that hinders peaceful political development. In addition, the Fatah-Hamas rivalry delegitimizes the Palestinian representational system, making a negotiated settlement impossible.

The two composers of the current work conclude that a quick breakthrough in Gaza reconciliation is unlikely under the current circumstances. The local actors, Hamas and the current Israeli government, show little willingness to reconcile, and there is enormous mistrust between the two sides. Meanwhile, two million innocent civilians are losing their lives in a devastated area, while some extremist political forces in Israel are striving to maintain the status quo, i.e., control over more than half of the territory. From this perspective, it seems that there is no realistic political solution to the conflict, and previous peace plans, such as the Trump plan, are doomed to failure because a network of structural, ideological, and regional factors keeps the parties locked in a dynamic in which the recurrence of wars is more likely than a political solution.

The clashes between Israel and Hamas have taken place with varying intensity, spatial and temporal extent. Nevertheless, there were common points, namely that Hamas always initiated the clashes, but Israel militarily always won the armed conflicts, and these always ended with ceasefires, which were then always violated again.

This work seeks to answer the question of whether the peace plan branded with Donald Trump's name can be successful, or will the cycle of violence continue?

Can the ceasefire, which is actually violated by Hamas daily and is therefore really a ceasefire, lead to reconciliation in the Holy Land? Will the peace plan presented in Sharm el-Sheikh amid a major American PR event be just one of many agreements aimed at Arab-Israeli reconciliation that have failed to achieve their goal?

In the following chapter, we present the most important obstacles that make lasting peace impossible. The chronological overview outlined in the first chapter also supports this claim.

The Vicious Cycle Of Violence, Alternating Between Ceasefire And Armed Clashes

The armed clashes between Hamas and Israel can be divided into several phases.

The formation of Hamas and the first intifada (1987–1993)

Hamas (Ḥarakat al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiyya, "Islamic Resistance Movement") was formed in December 1987 (NCTC, 2014) as the Gaza branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas is a portmanteau of the aforementioned Arabic term. Another meaning of this word is "devotion and zeal for the cause of Allah". The organization was founded by three main individuals. They were:

- Sheikh Ahmed Yassin: He was the iconic wheelchair-bound spiritual and supreme leader of Hamas, who was disabled by a childhood accident and led the organization until he died in 2004.

- Abdul Aziz al-Rantissi: Yassin's aide and one of the organization's founders, whose parents had settled in Gaza in 1948 during the Israeli War of Independence. Rantissi, who had received a medical degree in Egypt, was imprisoned by both the Israelis and the Palestinian Authority. The fanatical anti-Semite activist also wrote poetry and later became the leader of Hamas after Yassin's death, but he was also killed in an Israeli airstrike.

- Mahmoud al-Zahar (Mahmoud al-Zahar): also, a co-founder and a high-ranking Hamas leader, who later served as Foreign Minister of the Hamas government that came to power in Gaza in a coup. His son was killed by the Israelis for organizing a suicide bombing. He is the only surviving member of the founders. In his extreme hatred of Jews, he even called Jewish children a legitimate target. He is still alive, but has retired from politics due to his mental decline.

The Hamas Charter (also known as the Hamas Charter), formally titled the Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement, was completed on August 18, 1988. In this publication, the terrorist organization outlines the organization's founding ideological and political goals, and among them, it sets the goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate in place of the state of Israel. (FAS, 1988) Hamas has not given up its goal of destroying Israel and establishing the so-called Palestinian Caliphate to this day. Have to be noted that in May 2017, Hamas issued the "Document of General Principles and Policies" to appear more pragmatic to the international community. For example, Hamas expresses a willingness to accept a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders as a "formula of national consensus," though it still refuses to recognize Israel's legitimacy. (Sher, Ofek, Winter, 2017)

After December 1987 and in the first years, Hamas mainly limited its activities to stone-throwing, Molotov cocktail attacks, stabbings, and gunfire. However, in 1991, Hamas's military wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, was formed, which introduced a new form of asymmetric warfare, namely suicide bombings. (Des Roshez, D. 2025). The changes in Hamas's form of asymmetric warfare are illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Changes in Hamas's combat tactics

Period	Events
1987–1992	There are no suicide bombings, mainly stone throwing, Molotov cocktails, stabbings, low-level violent attacks on Israeli military personnel, and small arms attacks
16 April 1993.	First Hamas suicide bombing (Mehola, Jordan Valley, (Hoffman, 2006)
1994–1996	Serial suicide bombings in Israel, organized from Gaza, this method became Hamas' main tactical element; they preferred to attack bus route 18. In 1996, 59 Israelis lost their lives (Levitt, 2006)
2000–2005	During the Second Intifada, Hamas pioneered large-scale, widespread suicide bombings in Israeli cities targeting civilians (WINEP, 2005).
2006-2022	Shifted from sporadic firing to systematic, high-volume rocket launches designed to overwhelm Israel's Iron Dome (Eissa, S. 2025)
2023-2025	Following severe military damage in late 2023–2024, Hamas shifted toward small-unit guerrilla tactics, relying on IEDs, ambushes, and sniper attacks.
7 October 2025	Marked a shift to unprecedented, complex military operations, incorporating intelligence gathering, cyber warfare, combined-arms breaches of the border, and rapid attacks, i.e., hostage-taking, high-casualty raids. (Skare, E. 2025)

The fight against Fatah and the Oslo process (1993–2000)

The relationship between Fatah and the Oslo Accords (1993–2000) was a transformative era that saw the movement transition from a revolutionary guerrilla group to a governing body, ultimately ending in a violent collapse. With the signing of the Oslo I Accord (1993), Yasser Arafat's Fatah, as the dominant faction of the PLO, officially recognized Israel's right to exist. In return, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established, giving Fatah administrative control over parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

After the Oslo Accords (1993–1995) were concluded, the Palestinian Authority (led by Arafat) was established, which seemed willing to make peace with Israel. However, Groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad rejected Oslo, launching suicide bombings to derail the process. Fatah was often pressured by Israel and the US to crack down on these groups, leading to accusations of being an "enforcer" for the Israeli occupation.

In addition to this, despite the peace process, Israeli settlement expansion continued. This undermined Fatah's leadership, as many Palestinians felt that diplomacy was only providing a cover for further land loss.

Hamas opposes peace profoundly and, as can be seen from the previous table, tries to thwart it with suicide bombings (e.g., several bus bombings in 1996). This resulted in Israel arresting and/or liquidating several Hamas

leaders, including Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in 2004. (AFP, 2004). In 1994, Israel began building a fence system around the Gaza Strip, which it has been continuously developing, and which by 2021 had become a 65 km-long, high-tech defence system consisting of underground and aboveground parts, resting on a reinforced concrete base, equipped with sensors, cameras, and a drone system. (DW, 2012)

The Second Intifada and the Beginning of the Rocket War (2000–2005)

The so-called peace process reached a deadlock at the 2000 Camp David Summit. The failure to reach an agreement on core issues, such as the status of Jerusalem and the Right of Return for refugees, left Fatah's leadership in a political vacuum. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements during the negotiations severely eroded Palestinian trust in the process.

Arafat's awakened political position by Hamas, intense mutual mistrust, and irreconcilable differences on "final status" problems are all blamed for the 2000 Camp David Summit's collapse. Have to be noted that contrary to the narrative of Barak's purported "generous offer," the Israelis never submitted any written plans or made a formal offer to the Palestinians in Camp David. The Israelis merely made vague, oral suggestions, primarily through US diplomats. Before proceeding to further, more serious conversations, Arafat was under pressure from the Israelis and Americans to accept these ambiguous ideas as "bases for negotiations." (IMEU, 2005)

The collapse of diplomacy led to the Second Intifada. To regain popular legitimacy and lead the frustration of the Palestinian street, elements within Fatah (specifically the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades) returned to armed struggle. This effectively marked the end of the Oslo era, shifting Fatah from a partner in peace back to a direct participant in conflict.

During the Second Intifada (2000–2005), Hamas again assumed an active armed role and practically played a dominant role within the Palestinian movements. The Second Intifada began on September 28, 2000 (after Sharon visited the Temple Mount, (Goldenberger, S., 2000)), and lasted until approximately February 2005 (the Sharm el-Sheikh ceasefire). During this period, Hamas and other terrorist organizations carried out about 140 suicide bombings, of which Hamas carried out 57 in Israel. The number of Israeli victims reached 436. From 2001, Qassam rockets began to be produced and fired in increasing numbers. These cheap, primitive, but deadly terror missiles did not cause much trouble at first, but they were constantly developed and had an ever-increasing range. Only in 2006, 861 of these devices were fired at Israel, i.e., at population centres in the western Negev. (IICC, 2006)

This constant "rocket terror" prompted Israel to develop and deploy the Iron Dome system in 2011 (Dr. Rubi, U., 2011) and even the laser-based Iron Beam system, which reached operational readiness by September 2025. (Fabia, E., 2025). In 2005, Israel withdrew from Gaza, but maintained control over the borders and airspace.

Alternating waves of violence and ceasefires, the ceasefire-violating nature of Hamas

Hamas has continued its terrorist attacks against Israel in various forms since its formation in 1987. In the spirit of the land for peace principle, Israel has sought reconciliation with the Palestinians. For example, in 2005, it dismantled Israeli settlements in Gaza. and in some parts of the West Bank. After Hamas won the Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006, it began to carry out attacks not only against Israel, but also against other Palestinian organizations. Its goal is complete dominance, which is why it carried out an armed coup in Gaza and killed local Fatah leaders and sympathizers, to which Israel and Egypt responded by imposing a blockade on the area, which continues to this day.

Due to the constant and various forms of terrorist attacks, Israel has been forced to carry out various operations in Gaza from time to time. After the end of the first intifada, peace talks began, and in 1993, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel signed the Oslo Accords, the first formal peace agreement between the two parties. (DOS, 2000). However, Arafat, as leader of the PLO, later told Arab audiences (unofficially) that the Oslo Accords should be interpreted "on the model of Hudaybiyah."

What did this mean in practice? Quite simply, it meant that the Arabs were not obligated to abide by the agreement they had signed. Arafat's comment implied that the Oslo Accords were only a temporary step—and

that if the balance of power changed, the Palestinians could come up with new demands, not adhering to the results that had already been achieved through consensus and mutual compromise. We are witnessing similar non-compliant behaviour from the Taliban regarding the Doha Agreement and Hamas regarding dozens of ceasefires.

The October 7th Attack, Israel's Gaza War

To Israel's complete surprise, on October 7, 2023, Hamas launched an attack on Israel of unprecedented scale and brutality. It was the most horrific day in Israel's history. That morning, the Hamas terrorist organization invaded several kibbutzim, military bases, and attacked the NOVA music festival. In a matter of hours, the terrorists massacred nearly 1,200 people and took 251 hostages, both dead and alive. (IDF, 2024)

Entire families were burned alive in the kibbutzim. Before physically breaking through the security system, the terrorists fired thousands of rockets in a short period of time, overwhelming the otherwise highly accurate and effective Iron Dome system. According to Israeli data, at 6:30 A.M., at least 2,500 missiles were launched at Israel. Towns located near Gaza weren't the only ones affected; areas dozens of kilometres beyond the Green Line were also impacted. Sirens sounded throughout the southern regions of the country, including in such important cities as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The assault resulted in significant civilian losses, striking residential zones such as Ashkelon, Ashdod, Be'er Sheva, and Sderot directly.

According to intelligence information, in a meticulously planned and practiced operation, Hamas operatives penetrated the border fence and executed assaults on Israeli communities and military installations. The terrorists employed explosive devices and bulldozers to dismantle the barriers separating Israel and Gaza. The terrorists breached the fences at over 100 locations.

The fighting continued for days on end on Israeli territory. This was the heaviest Israeli civilian loss in the history of the State of Israel. Following the attack, Israel declared a state of emergency, which is still partially in effect. Have to note that the state of emergency is currently in effect in Israel. At the time of writing the article, the country is under an extended emergency declaration due to recent regional conflicts, specifically involving Iran and Hezbollah. On May 5, 2026, the Israeli government authorized a 14-day extension of the national state of emergency, which is now set to last until May 19, 2026. Two hours after the attack began, the IDF began bombing the Gaza Strip. It is not possible to provide a detailed description of the clashes within the scope of this article. The intensity of the two-year-old war has varied, and Israel currently controls 59% of Gaza. This is an increase from the 53% held during the ceasefire in October 2025. This is the demarcation line that Israel has been pushing westward, expanding its buffer zones and operational areas, and creating the so-called orange line. (Magid, P., Al-Mughrabi, N., Cornwell, A., 2026)

The authors would like to emphasize that the fighting is still ongoing on the day of writing this article, meaning that there is neither peace nor a real ceasefire. For example, on May 10, 2026, the IDF reported the destruction of two significant tunnels (2km in length) in central Gaza. Moreover, on the same day, the Israeli Air Force carried out strikes in Khan Younis and Gaza City, killing at least three people, including members of the Hamas-run police force. In accordance with the information from the BBC, at least 846 individuals, including numerous women and children, have died in Gaza since the start of the ceasefire. Israeli officials have reported that five of its soldiers lost their lives during that timeframe. (Knell, Y., Abualouf, A., 2026)

In early May, Israeli elite units also completed a two-month operation in northern Gaza, reportedly dismantling eight tunnel routes and killing dozens of militants.

At the beginning of the war, Israel set itself a dual goal: on the one hand, to return the hostages; this seems to have been achieved. Another fundamental goal was to remove Hamas from the leadership of the Gaza Strip. This goal was not achieved, which also predicts the continuation of the conflict.

The Special Geopolitical Situation Of Gaza

The Gaza Strip, covering 365 square kilometres, is characterized by high population density and is also a highly specific political entity, where its structure significantly obstructs peaceful progress. In the Gaza Strip,

regrettably, the Muslim Brotherhood discovered a receptive environment and increased its appeal by first presenting itself as a social assistance group, a charitable organization, and a group that supports religious practices, whereas the bureaucratic and corrupt Fatah system experienced diminishing influence. For the reasons already explained, Israel and Egypt have placed Gaza under a blockade, which has turned it into a quasi-open prison, but the smuggling and the constant influx of foreign money have made Hamas's local and exiled leaders multi-millionaires. Ismail Haniyeh, for example, has amassed a fortune of \$2.5 billion. Hamas treats women in an extremely inhumane manner, practically using them as child-bearing robots.

After several rounds of negotiations, Israeli troops withdrew from the Gaza Strip in September 2005, handing it over to the Palestinians. The strip was politically controlled by the Palestinian National Authority, which was jointly run by the two largest Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas. However, the final result of the local elections held on January 26, 2006, overrode the paper version: the internationally recognized and domestically supported political group, Fatah, lost. It is an interesting fact that the last survey conducted on election day predicted a victory for Fatah, and the exit poll results forecasted this result even 4 hours after the polls closed.

The blockade maintained by Israel and Egypt since Hamas's bloody takeover of Gaza in 2007 has had a structural effect on the area. While Israel justifies the restrictions with its security interests (preventing Hamas from arming itself), the economic impact is catastrophic. Unemployment in Gaza is among the highest in the world, and a large part of the population requires humanitarian aid. The population is being used in a completely targeted manner, as a demographic bomb. First, Gaza's fertility rate peaked at 8 in the 1990s, meaning that 65% of Gaza's population is under 25 today. (WPR, 2023)

Political demographers see a correlation between the composition of the population and its propensity for political violence, as the 15-30 age group in the state is most prone to committing acts of terrorism against Israel, as we saw on October 7.

Consequently, there are a lot of children in Gaza. As of October 2023, 47.3% of Gaza's population was under 18, which is a huge burden on the Gazan economy. (Mohammad, 2023) By increasing the dependency ratio, that is, the ratio of children and the elderly to the working-age population, it is skyrocketing. Gaza currently has a dependency ratio of nearly 0.74. This is the highest in the world outside of Africa and Afghanistan. Obviously, Gaza's main economic problem is the fact that it is under a complete blockade, cut off from the outside world from the branch, but the high dependency ratio does not help, and Gaza's economic difficulties, including high poverty and unemployment rates, only fuel political unrest. Unemployment was extremely high even before the war, at around 65%, and almost 100% among women of childbearing age. (ILO, 2024)

These figures are clearly higher today. Hamas does not care about the fate of its own people, its own children, but has spent the material resources it has received, billions of dollars, not on infrastructure development, but on digging terror tunnels. As a result, water, food, and energy supplies are a constant source of tension. Those suffering from a politically divided entity due to Hamas terror are unable to change their situation on their own.

The Hamas propaganda machine dominates everything; it has its own newspaper, radio, and television station, its own football club, and dominates the entire education system, so the growing generations will be brainwashed, completely adopting the ideology of radical Islam. With such an ideology, Gaza under Hamas rule, and the West Bank under Fatah, where *Mein Kampf* is an extremely popular book, the accession of a population of about 5.5 million to the state of Israel in any form, let us say calmly, is unthinkable and unacceptable for Israel.) Furthermore, the lack of Palestinian unity is also an insurmountable obstacle to real peace negotiations. The Trump plan also recognizes the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians, of which Hamas is not a member. Consequently, for Israel and the international community, there is no single, legitimate negotiating partner representing the entire Palestinian population. Any agreement reached with the Palestinian Authority (Fatah) will remain irrelevant for Gaza, and vice versa.

Economic hopelessness and lack of the future undermine support for moderate political forces (e.g., Fatah) and provide fertile ground for recruitment by radical groups, as well as a hotbed for those who present "resistance" as the only way to survive. Widespread poverty and the dependency relationship maintained by the blockade

will not allow a middle class to emerge among the population, which would act strongly against the war in its economic interests.

Israeli Domestic Politics: The Consolidation Of the Status Quo, The Fusion Of Security and Religious Zionism

On the Israeli side, the attitude towards peace is largely based on security policy traumas and the strengthening of right-wing/religious political forces, which have systematically eroded the strength of the peace movement and parties that promote the idea of some kind of reconciliation. This is so true: the Israeli Labor Party (Golda Meir, Simon Perez), which in the past gave rise to highly charismatic politicians, has very low support according to November 2025 data, and, according to opinion polls, the party is hovering around the parliamentary threshold.

No agreement was reached at the peace talks held at Camp David in July 2000. Despite Israel's renewed willingness to make significant compromises, Yasser Arafat was unwilling to make any agreements. In this tense situation, Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount, which was peaceful and not forbidden, since anyone could visit the holy place, only praying was prohibited. Unfortunately, however, mainly the tension-inciting propaganda of Hamas led Arab youth to attack Jews praying at the Western Wall. Arabs imbued with Jewish hatred began angry demonstrations, which culminated in armed clashes, and the so-called second intifada began.

In the five-year clashes in Gaza and the West Bank, about 3,000 Arabs and about 1,000 Israelis lost their lives. (B'Tselem, 2010). These five-year clashes pushed Israeli public opinion in the direction that the Arabs who call themselves Palestinians do not want peace, and it is not worth negotiating with them. This disillusionment led to the strengthening and growing influence of far-right and religious-Zionist parties on the Israeli side, which ultimately resulted in the fact that interest in the so-called two-state solution decreased to a minimum.

The popularity of political forces seeking peace in Israeli domestic politics gradually decreased. Likud, founded in 1973, won elections in 1977 with the slogan "from the sea to the river", becoming the first right-wing party to come to power in Israel. Thanks to its popularity, it was able to form a government several times. However, in 2022, only the "Jewish Power" (Otzma Yehudit) and the Religious Zionism Party (HaTzionut HaDatit) were able to form a government with the help of ultra-Orthodox and ultra-nationalist, anti-Arab and Jewish supremacist parties. Likud has lost a significant portion of its voters, and 42% of them intend to vote for another party. Consequently, Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud is likely to lose the next elections, although it should be noted that the Israeli domestic political mood can change very quickly. (TOI, 2026).

The current Israeli leadership is pro-peace at the level of declarations. However, on the one hand, its policy is characterized by a huge lack of trust: concerning the Palestinian factions, which can be explained by significant security policy traumas (the terror of the two intifadas, the failure of the "peace for the land" policy, October 07). On the other hand, in the government coalition, extreme right-wing Orthodox religious political forces support Likud. Likud itself rejects the two-state solution and imposes conditions that are unacceptable to the Palestinians. For example, recognition of Israel, disarmament of Hamas, further territorial concessions, and recognition of the annexation of the currently occupied territories.

These forces are systematically eroding the political forces that advocate Israeli reconciliation and the strength of the peace movement. So much so that today there is actually no major political party that would advocate reconciliation.

In fact, it is also true. Unfortunately, if Israel wants to negotiate reconciliation, it will not find a partner on the other side, that is, "there is no partner for peace" on the Palestinian side. This view - which is also reinforced by the actions of Hamas and other terrorist organizations - legitimizes the policy of managing the conflict, not resolving it. That is, sometimes you have to "go into Gaza and clean up," and that is enough to deal with the problem.

To understand the current Israeli political situation, it is important to see that the Jewish settler movement, and the extremist religious Zionist parties that represent them, such as Bezael Smotrich's party, hold government positions, and Smotrich is currently the finance minister. Otzma Yehudit, or Jewish Power, is also a member of

the governing coalition. This party is led by Itamar Ben-Gvir, the Minister of National Security. This party also takes an ultranationalist stance and strongly supports the establishment of Jewish settlements in the West Bank (and some in Gaza).

These parties are part of the current governing coalition and have significant influence in shaping policies related to the settlers, such as the supervision and expansion of settlements in the West Bank. They are able to strongly influence the decisions of the prime minister.

In addition, the larger conservative Likud party, Netanyahu's party, also includes members and supporters who support settlements, and the party's platform has historically opposed Palestinian statehood and supported settlements in the West Bank. Although there are nuances within Likud, many members of the party's right wing have close ties to the settler movement. Settler movements, such as the Nachala movement, also have direct representatives in the Knesset who have entered parliament on the lists of these parties. It is clear that the disillusionment with the Israeli peace process, the terror suffered, and now, if we add to this the horror of October 7, do not at all favour any reconciliation process or the much-touted "two-state solution."

Mediation Attempts, Egypt, Qatar, And The Un In The Reconciliation Process

The mediation role of Egypt

The relationship between Egypt and Hamas is an extremely complex, pragmatic, and fundamentally security-based "cold relationship", characterized by a duality of mutual dependence and deep ideological distrust. Cairo is not an ally of Hamas, but treats it as an inevitable partner, since Egypt borders the Gaza Strip. It is well known that the Sisi regime treats the Muslim Brotherhood as an enemy. Since Hamas was founded by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, it also considers this organization as an enemy. At the same time, it is able to play a mediating role: Even more, on June 18, 2021, it donated \$500 million for the reconstruction of Gaza. (Mandour M., 2021).

Egypt has been a crucial and necessary mediator between Israel and Hamas over the past few decades and remains so in the present. This mediation is facilitated, firstly, by Egypt's specific geographic position, as it borders both the Gaza Strip, governed by Hamas, and Israel. Secondly, Egypt's distinct intelligence relationships enable this function.

Egypt has acted as a mediator between Israel and Hamas on dozens of occasions in recent decades. This is true even though Egypt, along with Israel, imposed a blockade on Gaza after Hamas took power in 2007.

Egypt has played a key and indispensable role as a mediator between Israel and Hamas in recent decades. This role is made possible, on the one hand, by Egypt's special geographical location, as it shares a border with both Hamas-ruled Gaza and Israel. On the other hand, Egypt's unique intelligence connections make this role possible.

Although restrictions on movement in Gaza have existed in various forms since the 1990s, since Israel abolished the general travel permit for Palestinians in 1991 and then built the first physical border fence around the zone in 1994. (Guarnieri M., 2011)

The exact number of mediations is difficult to determine, as the process is for smaller ceasefire agreements and humanitarian pauses, so the number of diplomatic consultations exceeds a hundred. For example, during the 34-day war of 2008-2009, Egypt and France jointly mediated for a ceasefire. On January 6, 2009, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak launched a three-point peace plan in Sharm el-Sheikh. President Sarkozy personally travelled to the Middle East, holding urgent talks with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, and regional leaders in Syria and Lebanon. The plan called for an immediate ceasefire, the opening of humanitarian corridors, and international cooperation to stop weapons smuggling into Gaza. While Israel and Hamas ultimately declared separate, unilateral ceasefires on January 18, 2009, the Franco-Egyptian plan provided the diplomatic bridge that allowed both sides to stop the fighting without signing a direct agreement. During the Franco-Egyptian ceasefire negotiations in January 2009, France and the EU proposed reactivating and expanding the EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah. (EUSDP, 2009).

The Egyptian government (2012–2013) led by Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, which came to power as a result of the Arab Spring, maintained a close political and ideological alliance with Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip and was its ideological sister party. Support was crucial, but it also followed a dual strategy. On the one hand, Morsi's government significantly eased the isolation of the Gaza Strip, which had been strictly maintained by the previous Mubarak regime. High-level diplomatic relations were ensured, which reached their peak during the Israeli attacks (such as Operation Pillar of Cloud in 2012). Morsi recalled the Egyptian ambassador from Israel. (Soliman, M., 2017).

On the one hand, Morsi's government significantly eased the isolation of the Gaza Strip, which had been strictly maintained by the former Mubarak regime. They ensured high-level diplomatic relations, which reached their peak during the Israeli attacks (for example, during Operation Pillar of Cloud in 2012). Morsi recalled the Egyptian ambassador from Israel. At the same time, they did not allow Iranian rockets to be smuggled into Gaza, and were even able to broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in November 2012. (Momani, B., 2012). Morsi tried to balance ideological, political, and diplomatic support for Hamas with his international obligations stemming from the Camp David Accords and preserving the stability of the Sinai Peninsula. The relationship between Hamas and Egypt deteriorated immediately and drastically after the 2013 mass protests against the Muslim Brotherhood and the bloodless military takeover, as the new Egyptian leadership viewed Hamas as a national security risk.

The most important, comprehensive ceasefire or hostage-exchange agreements Egypt has brokered in recent years are the so-called “50-day war” in 2014. A long Egyptian mediation process resulted in a lasting ceasefire that then ended the Israeli-Hamas conflict temporarily. A fragile ceasefire and blockade characterized the period from 2015 to 2017. The three years following the 2014 war brought relatively low-intensity clashes, but the aforementioned structural problems persisted. Israel and Egypt maintained a strict land, air, and sea blockade of the Gaza Strip to prevent the supply of weapons. At the same time, the blockade led to a humanitarian crisis in Gaza, with severe electricity and drinking water shortages and extremely high unemployment. Hamas continued to rebuild its underground tunnel system, which the Israeli army sought to neutralize with a high-tech underground defensive wall system built along the Gaza border.

Egypt's policy towards Hamas between 2014 and 2018 began with a deeply hostile, armed repression phase, and then transformed from 2017 into a pragmatic relationship based on security cooperation. The behaviour of the Cairo government during this period was fundamentally determined by the fight against the Islamist insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula and the preservation of stability in the Gaza Strip.

Between 2014 and 2016, Egyptian policy was characterized by virtually total blockade and hostility, as after Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi removed the Hamas-allied Muslim Brotherhood from power in 2013, Cairo viewed Hamas as a terrorist organization and a direct threat to national security. During this period, Egypt launched a campaign to eliminate smuggling routes between Gaza and Egypt. Hundreds of tunnels along the border were blown up, filled with sewage or seawater, and a wide security buffer zone was established at Rafah, effectively supporting Israel's blockade. A kind of cooperation has developed between Egypt and Hamas in the fight against ISIS. In 2017, Hamas special forces virtually destroyed ISIS's Gaza branch, leading ISIS to label Hamas as infidels. (Warmenbol, G., 2019). In addition, Hamas issued a new political charter in 2017, formally distancing itself from the Muslim Brotherhood. In return, Egypt began to open the Rafah border crossing to civilian traffic more regularly and allowed the transport of fuel and goods into Gaza.

Additionally, in October 2017, Egypt brokered a reconciliation agreement in Cairo between Hamas and the West Bank's Fatah (Palestinian Authority). (Marteu, E., 2017). However, this agreement foundered because the two Palestinian factions were unable to agree on armed control of the Gaza Strip, civil servant salaries, and real power-sharing. Despite the fact that the US supported the agreement and Israel did not reject it, this agreement suffered the same fate as the agreements reached in Mecca in 2007, Sanaa in 2008, Cairo in 2011, Doha in 2012, again in Cairo in 2012, and in the Shati refugee camp in 2014.

Between 2018 and 2021, Egypt successfully brokered short-term ceasefires on several occasions to curb escalation at the borders.

The relationship between Egypt and Hamas between 2021 and 2023 was characterized by pragmatic, security-based cooperation and inevitable interdependence. Although the Egyptian government, led by Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi remained ideologically hostile to the Hamas-affiliated Muslim Brotherhood, Cairo recognized that a partnership with the organization that dominates the Gaza Strip was essential for regional stability, and Cairo continued its *modus operandi* with Hamas.

The outbreak of war on October 7, 2023, dramatically changed the relationship between Hamas and Egypt. Although Egypt immediately began humanitarian mediation and negotiations for the release of hostages, it categorically refused to accept Palestinian refugees into the Sinai Peninsula for national security reasons, fearing that Hamas militants might relocate to Egyptian territory. On the other hand, it feared that a large number of refugees would break through the border as a result of Israeli army operations, so it deployed a strong military force near the border. (Iddon, P., 2025).

Currently, the Egyptian government under President Sisi continues to act as the leading regional mediator, using diplomatic and administrative means to maintain the Gaza ceasefire and find a permanent solution to the crisis. Following the Gaza ceasefire framework agreement reached at the Sharm el-Sheikh peace summit in October 2025, Cairo's role has shifted to guaranteeing the implementation of the agreement and ensuring stability in the wider Middle East. As part of these efforts, Egypt accepted a US invitation to join the international Peace Council, a body overseeing the post-war transition and interim administration of Gaza. Cairo remains a permanent negotiating center, with regular meetings with Hamas delegations and international mediators to implement the first phase of the agreement and address sensitive issues such as Hamas's disarmament.

At the same time, President Sisi is pressuring the international community to quickly enter the second phase of the ceasefire roadmap, while urging Israel to strictly adhere to its commitments from the initial phase, including troop withdrawals, which have not been implemented. In the administrative and humanitarian arena, Egypt is using its diplomatic influence to support the establishment of a Palestinian National Committee to take over internal governance of the Gaza Strip from Hamas. Cairo is also pushing for the rapid deployment of an international stabilization force. Meanwhile, Egypt continues to manage humanitarian corridors through the Rafah crossing, allowing thousands of wounded Palestinians to receive treatment in Egyptian hospitals, while coordinating the continued flow of aid convoys, such as the Zad Al Ezza missions, into the Strip. (Samir A., 2026).

Last but not least, Egypt is actively working towards broader regional de-escalation and the protection of Palestinian statehood. Egypt has taken a firm stance against any displacement or forced evacuation of its population. In an effort to prevent a wider conflict, Cairo has expanded its backroom diplomacy to bridge the gap between Washington and Tehran, working closely with regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan to create a more stable environment in the Middle East.

Qatar's financial support and intermediary role

Qatar has a long-standing and systematic history of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, utilizing the organization and its regional affiliates as a primary instrument of foreign policy and soft power across the Middle East and beyond. Although Doha officially dissolved the local branch of the movement within its own borders in 1999, its external backing has remained robust.

The cornerstone of this relationship is the state-funded Al Jazeera network, which for decades has provided a powerful global megaphone to the Brotherhood's leading ideologues, such as the late Yusuf al-Qaradawi, effectively popularizing its political Islam narrative (Ebner, J., Kavanagh, C., Whitehouse, H., 2025). Qatar's support intensified significantly during the 2011 Arab Spring, during which Doha provided massive financial aid to empower the Brotherhood in Egypt and Tunisia. During Mohamed Morsi's presidency in Egypt, Qatar sustained the Brotherhood-led government with approximately \$7.5 billion in loans and energy resources. Furthermore, when Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates subsequently designated the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization and launched a crackdown, Qatar offered safe haven, financial security, and diplomatic protection to the group's exiled leadership. (Mendelsonh, B., 2025)

This patronage extends directly to Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, with Qatar hosting Hamas's political office in Doha and channelling billions of dollars in financial aid into the Gaza Strip over the years [israel-alma.org]. Western intelligence and investigative organizations have also documented those quasi-governmental entities like the Qatar Charity fund, various European Islamic centres, mosques, and schools tied to the Global Muslim Brotherhood network.

This overt alignment with political Islam was the primary catalyst for the 2017 Gulf diplomatic crisis, which saw Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt impose a severe blockade on Qatar over accusations of sponsoring terrorism. While the blockade was formally lifted years later, Qatar has largely maintained its core strategic approach, preserving its ties to radical Islamist groups to cement its role as an indispensable diplomatic mediator between the West and regional actors.

Qatar's financial support to Hamas and its mediator role

Although Qatar is a relatively small country, it is one of the richest countries in the world and has been able to play a mediating role in negotiations with organizations or countries with which the United States and Israel have no relations, i.e., Hamas.

Qatar's financial involvement in Gaza began in 2012 with larger amounts, and since 2018 has evolved into a permanent, monthly, and annual funding system. It is known that Syria, due to its stance supporting the Sunni rebels led by Hamas during the Arab Spring, cut off its support for Hamas, and the Hamas leadership moved its headquarters to Qatar. Qatar accepted the Hamas leadership partly for ideological reasons, partly to achieve its foreign policy positioning, and at the express request of the United States. Qatar has a special negotiating stance. It has a tight relationship with Hamas and maintains good ties with the United States.

According to Qatari officials, this small country gave \$1.49 billion in aid to Gaza between 2012 and 2021. (De Luce. D., Cavazuti, L., 2023). The following graph depicts Qatari financial aid to Gaza by year.

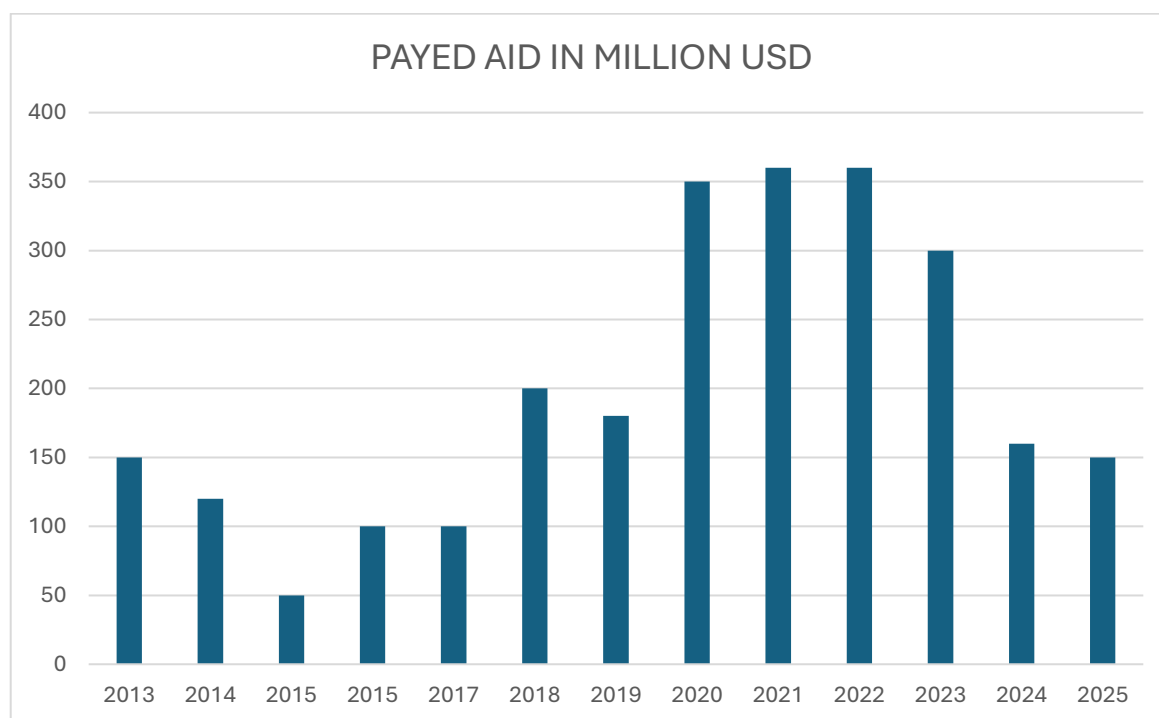


Figure Nr 1: Qatari financial aid to Gaza 2013-2025

Qatar does not see itself as an ideological ally or a supporter of Hamas's armed wing, but maintains relations with the organization along a pragmatic and conscious foreign policy strategy. According to Doha's official

position, the financial support provided is not for the group itself, but for the humanitarian survival of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

The most important factor behind the relationship is Qatar's role as a global and regional mediator. Since Western countries treat Hamas as a terrorist organization, they cannot negotiate with them directly. By hosting the organization's political office in Doha since 2012, Qatar provides an indispensable diplomatic bridge through which the West and Israel can communicate indirectly with the movement. This status as a mediator has allowed Qatar to play a key role in the Gaza ceasefire agreements and the hostage release negotiations. (O'Dell, H., 2023, October 27.)

International and Israeli invitations are also fundamental pillars of this relationship. The opening of the Hamas office in Doha, according to official sources, was at the express request and approval of Washington when the leadership left Damascus due to the Syrian civil war; the aim was to prevent the organization from falling under the exclusive influence of Tehran or Moscow. In parallel, for years, the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu explicitly encouraged and allowed Qatar to send millions to Gaza. Part of the Israeli strategy was to use Qatari money to maintain relative calm on the border, while keeping Hamas politically alive, weakening the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, consciously preventing the creation of a unified Palestinian state.

There is also a historical-ideological background to the cooperation, which is linked to the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Qatar's foreign policy has traditionally been open to moderate Islamist political trends, and since Hamas was ideologically established as a Palestinian offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, Doha saw it as a natural partner against the secular but corrupt Fatah movement. Finally, the open representation of the Palestinian cause is an outstanding soft power tool for Qatar. Its commitment to the Palestinian cause means enormous popularity and political legitimacy in the Muslim and Arab worlds.

Qatar uses the revenues from its natural gas wealth to position itself in the eyes of the Arab public as the main defender of the Palestinian people by financing hospitals, schools, and infrastructure in Gaza, as well as by targeted media coverage by Al Jazeera television. Therefore, Qatar sees this relationship not as support for terrorism, but as a realpolitik tool that ensures the country's international weight, independence, and protection from the pressure of its much larger regional neighbours.

Starting after the Arab Spring, between 2012 and 2025, Qatar provided more than \$2.5 billion in financial and humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, continuously adapting the nature of its funding to the shifting political and military landscape.

During the initial phase between 2012 and 2017, the support focused heavily on infrastructure and reconstruction, with Qatar financing large-scale housing projects like Hamad Residential City alongside major road and school rehabilitations. This mechanism shifted drastically between 2018 and 2023 when, with the explicit approval of Israel and the United States, Qatar launched the "suitcases of cash" mechanism. This program, which was later converted into a UN-vetted digital card system, allowed Doha to distribute \$100 monthly stipends to 100,000 impoverished families, co-fund public sector civil servant salaries, and purchase the necessary fuel to keep Gaza's sole power plant running.

Following the outbreak of the war, cash transfers became impossible, forcing Qatar to pivot entirely to a wartime humanitarian lifeline throughout 2024 and 2025. During this period, Doha deployed supply convoys and strategic land bridges to deliver hundreds of thousands of winterized tents, food baskets, clean water, and medical supplies directly to displaced civilians, while simultaneously providing multi-million dollar emergency core grants to keep the UNRWA operational. Throughout the entire timeline, Doha has consistently framed this massive financial support not as a funding mechanism for Hamas, but as a crucial humanitarian lifeline for Palestinian civilians and a strategic realpolitik tool that cements its role as an indispensable diplomatic mediator between the West and the Middle East.

The Religious-Ideological Terror That Animates Hamas And Its Consequences

One of the most insurmountable obstacles in the Gaza conflict is that the ideological goals of the parties are fundamentally mutually exclusive, resulting in a kind of "zero-sum game", where the success of one side means

the complete failure of the other. This opposition is embedded on both the political and psychological levels. The insolubility of the conflict is reinforced by the opposed ideologies that mutually exclude each other's right to exist.

The basic charter and ideology of Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) is the rejection of the existence of the State of Israel, its destruction, and the establishment of a radical, fundamentalist Palestinian Caliphate between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The basic document of Hamas, therefore (although slightly modified in 2017), clearly states that the State of Israel has no right to exist in the territory of Palestine. This principled, ideological stance means the following:

1. First, as some other Arab countries do, it refers to the 1967 "Khartoum Declaration", the final document of the Arab League summit held after the loss of the Six-Day War (Khartoum, Sudan, August 29-September 1, 1967), which states the "three no" regarding Israel, according to which:

-No peace with Israel.

-No recognition of Israel

-No negotiations with Israel

2. For Hamas, this means that there is no deal within the framework of peace; there can be no deal that recognizes the existence of the Jewish state, that is, any compromise agreement towards peaceful coexistence with Israel would mean giving up Hamas' ideological principles, which would jeopardize the organization's internal legitimacy and regional support.

3. The cessation of armed resistance as a fundamental right, its abandonment, as a result of any deal, is not an option; in other words, for Hamas, armed struggle is not a tactical tool, but the fundamental religious and political command of life under the so-called "occupation", the fundamental condition of legitimate existence.

Let us not forget that Hamas is not just a political-military organization, but a representative of the radical wing of political Islam, whose goals transcend territorial political deals. This is evidenced by Hamas's so-called "Charter", which is a de facto denial of Israel as an entity. So, logically, accepting peace or a lasting two-state solution would amount to the ideological self-destruction of the movement. Hamas considers armed resistance, jihad, to be the only legitimate path. With this fundamentalist position, it displaces all moderate Palestinian voices that would seek a compromise with Israel.

Furthermore, Hamas's power and popularity in Gaza are not based on effective governance (which is largely unachievable), but on the promise of unwavering resistance to Israel (Muqawama), i.e., the promise of prosperity after Israel's destruction. This source of legitimacy is stronger than current economic prosperity, especially in the era of deep poverty caused by the blockade. Any negotiated peace that would require the disarmament of the armed wing or the recognition of the political wing by Israel directly threatens Hamas's internal cohesion and its leading role within Palestinian society (i.e., between Arab tribes and clans).

Conflict Psychology: Experienced Trauma and Neglect of the Other

Peace-making is made impossible emotionally and psychologically by mutual distrust and ongoing trauma. Mutual dehumanization, i.e., the mechanism of dehumanization, is strongly at work on both sides during repeated violence. Hamas portrays Jews as "occupiers" and "colonizers" (JVL, 2017).

At the same time, the Israeli narrative often identifies Hamas and a portion of the Gaza population as the source of "constant terror" (Zoletti, J., Sharp, J. M., 2024). Hamas's education system portrays Jews as beings to be slaughtered, and from childhood, they are taught that Jews must be killed. This barbaric stigmatization inhibits empathy and perpetuates the belief that the other side is not a rational political partner, but only an enemy to be defeated and killed.

The success of peace processes would depend on the slow building of trust. Hamas's frequent violations of ceasefires, kidnappings, hostage dramas, and the high number of innocent Israeli civilian casualties irreversibly destroy trust. The Israeli population sees Hamas's armament and threat, while the Palestinians in Gaza experience the blockade of reconstruction and the trauma of continuous military interventions. The lack of trust capital towards Hamas is natural and understandable on the Israeli side, which is what blocks the possibility of political compromise the most.

The failure of peace in Gaza and the broader Arab-Israeli peace is not only the fault of the two entities involved, but also of the political games of regional and major powers. In our opinion, the broader regional power dynamics are largely responsible, which have used and are using the local conflict for global and regional purposes. During the Cold War, the formula was relatively simpler; the United States of America supported Israel, which the Arab states supported by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries wanted to destroy.

After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the situation changed, which was manifested primarily in the spread of radical Shiite ideas, characterized by the name of Khomeini, and the emergence of Shiite terrorist organizations created by Iran. The military defeat of the Saddam regime, the American occupation of Iraq, and the US military defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq provided an opportunity to expand Iran's policy of supporting terrorism and to build a widely established terrorist organization, which they called the "Axis of Resistance" in their rhetoric. It is worth noting the strategic mistakes of the US here, since with the elimination of the Saddam regime, the only realistic military force that could have kept the Iranian regime in check was eliminated. The Gulf War also resulted in Iran allying with Hamas, on the principle of "my enemy is my friend," and beginning to provide financial and military support to Hamas.

The arming of Hezbollah, the Iraqi Shiite militias, the generously supported Syrian Assad regime, and the Yemeni Houthis, created by the Iranian repressive regime, were all part of the so-called geopolitical plan of the "Shiite Crescent". With these organizations, Iran not only gained significant influence but also used the militants of these organizations to wage proxy wars against the main enemy, Israel. The influence of these external forces increases the strength and radicalism of Hamas, thus sowing the seeds of moderate solutions. Iran maintains the front against Israel through Hamas in the so-called "occupied territories." Through its financial, military, and technological support, Hamas was able to build and maintain an armed capacity that allowed it to launch rocket attacks and maintain constant tension. For Iran, the Gaza conflict has strategic value, as it distracts Israel, the US, and the international community from its nuclear program and maintains its influence over the so-called Axis of Resistance (Hezbollah, the Syrian regime, Iran, the Yemeni Houthis, numerous terrorist organizations, and militias in various countries). A possible peace in Gaza would weaken Iran's regional position. (BTH, 2025)

It is certainly important to raise the long-standing dual role of Qatar. On the one hand, Hamas, after its expulsion from Syria, provided a home for the political leadership of Hamas, and on the other hand, it provided financial support to the Gaza Strip in the form of alleged humanitarian aid. At the same time, it has been revealed on several occasions that Qatar has also supported organizations affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. It is trying to achieve both regional and global influence by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.

Money from Qatari, Iranian, and other sources has allowed Hamas to remain in power and operate, while the basic infrastructure of the Gaza Strip has been supported by international support. This model has maintained the conflict situation, as it is financed by Hamas in such a way that the organization should account for its finances. This was also characteristic of Fatah. We know that Arafat's wife fled Ramallah with 2 billion dollars. (Regular, A., 2004).

Paralysis and the interests of the international community

International organizations, and of course the UN, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, are unable to present a unified position. In addition, the main problem is that UNRWA, the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees in the Middle East, has become quite discredited due to its involvement in the events of October 7. Israeli sources adequately prove that more than 10 percent of UNRWA's Gaza staff were in contact with terrorist groups, such as Hamas, and that educational institutions operating under the auspices of the organization consistently incite hatred of Israel and glorify terror.

This in itself is a state of mind that is divided and does not encourage those receiving assistance to settle down or get a job. Several questions arise, such as how someone can be a refugee in their own country, and why there are so-called refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, since these are under Palestinian authority. Initially, the humanitarian aid provided by UNRWA played an important role (essential for the survival of the population), but today it is unaffordable. On the other hand, this aid does not solve the political root of the conflict; it also raises the question of why the so-called sister Arab countries do not grant citizenship to those who have been living there for generations, who have lived there and are de facto part of the tax system.

This situation essentially contributes to maintaining the status quo. There are still 20 Arab League member states that do not recognize the fact that a Jewish state has existed since 1949. Iran, which initially maintained friendly relations with Israel, withdrew its recognition of the Jewish state in 1979 and has been working to destroy it ever since.

The UN Security Council is also regularly paralyzed by differences of opinion among its permanent members. Interestingly, no resolution condemning Hamas was adopted in connection with the October 7 massacre, due to the position of Russia and China. Several resolution proposals were submitted by various countries, but none were adopted. The proposals supported by the US were vetoed by Russia and China, while the proposals put forward by Russia or other Arab countries were vetoed by the US, as they did not condemn Hamas or recognize Israel's right to self-defence. This paralysis within the UN, due to the divergent interests of the member states, is the reason why it is practically impossible to adopt any binding resolution to end the conflict.

The United States, as Israel's main strategic ally, is a key player. Effective pressure on Israel would be needed to bring about peace. American foreign policy, although it sometimes advocates a two-state solution, in practice maintains the status quo through security cooperation. At the same time, the US has lost credibility due to its role in the Iraq war. Overthrowing Saddam Hussein, it paved the way for both Iranian expansion and the emergence of terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State. American pressure on Iranian-backed terrorist organizations would also be necessary for the Middle East peace process. However, this can only be imagined by armed means, and as long as the current Shiite dictatorship in Iran is in power, the US will only be able to exert pressure on them for a while. So, in fact, the key to peace lies with Iran. Despite suffering a major defeat in the 12-day war that took place between June 13 and June 25, 2025, Iran has not given up its ambitions to develop nuclear weapons, and it still considers the destruction of Israel as its goal. At the time of writing, the US-Israeli-Iranian armed conflict, which began on February 28, 2026, is still ongoing, and the outcome of negotiations and diplomatic efforts to end it is unknown, but it is estimated that Iran has no intention of giving up his nuclear ambition.

It should also be noted that, paradoxically, for some regional actors, peace is a greater threat than conflict. The Iran-led axis (Hamas, Hezbollah) can justify its armament programs and regional interventions by maintaining the conflict. In the event of a lasting peace, these organizations would lose the primary goal on which they built their support and legitimacy. That is why normalization, such as the extension of the Abraham Accords, is a mortal threat to them, and they will do everything they can to sabotage it. From the point of view of Hamas and its supporters, the goal of any escalation is to sabotage the normalization processes between Israel and the Arab states. By maintaining the conflict, they force Arab states (e.g., Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates) to distance themselves from Israel, at least on a rhetorical level, thereby hindering the achievement of broader regional peace.

CONCLUSIONS

The Gaza Strip has been a source of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians for decades. More than two-thirds of the population are Palestinian families who fled or were forced to leave their homes during the war surrounding the establishment of Israel in 1948. In the late 1980s, the first Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule broke out in Gaza, and the Islamic militant group Hamas was formed, rejecting the existence of Israel.

The Gaza conflict is not simply a territorial dispute, but a constellation of historical, ideological, and regional factors that make it impossible to achieve lasting peace and a two-state solution. As long as the economic blockade maintains hopelessness and radicalization, as long as Palestinian political forces are divided, and as

long as both sides are dominated by ideologies that reject the rights of the other in principle, any ceasefire will remain only a temporary ceasefire.

The failures of the Oslo reconciliation process and especially the Camp David peace agreement, the terrorist wave of the second intifada, and, most notably, the terrorist attack of October 7, 2023, have reinforced the widespread Israeli view that there is no real partner for peace on the Palestinian side, which would be very difficult to argue with. This narrative is validated by Hamas' radical actions, allowing right-wing Israeli governments to focus on managing the conflict (reducing violence, deterrence) rather than resolving it (territorial compromise). Achieving lasting peace is only possible by addressing the roots of the conflict (ideologically defeating Hamas, disarming it, disbanding its military forces, and transforming it into a political party).

It is necessary to renew the Palestinian Authority recognized by the West, and to replace the Abbas-style nomenclature with an expert government that is truly capable of addressing the problems of the poor. A secular, or at least moderate, Muslim education system must be established in both Gaza and the West Bank. If these are achieved, it will be possible to conditionally lift the blockade of Gaza and create Palestinian unity. Accepting the current situation, i.e., recognizing the existence of Israel, by the Arab states can lead to a constructive negotiated settlement. Taking into account the current geopolitical situation, all of this unfortunately seems like a distant, even utopian goal. It is also obvious that Israeli domestic policy needs to change since the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza in 2005.

The Israeli withdrawal did not bring reconciliation; that is, the principle of land for peace did not work. On the contrary, it gave space to Hamas, which legitimized as a political victory those Israeli right-wing forces who oppose the transfer of part of the West Bank and make any current compromise impossible.

The chances of lasting peace in the Gaza Strip are minimal as long as the structural, ideological, and geopolitical obstacles presented above persist. The solution to the conflict does not depend on a single ceasefire agreement, but on the elimination of deep-rooted systemic problems: easing the blockade, unifying the Palestinian political leadership, and eliminating external proxy interventions. The current dynamics allow for the temporary maintenance of a negative peace (the absence of violence, or rather its reduction to a lower level), but the conditions for a positive peace (addressing the roots of the conflict) are not given. It logically follows from the above analyses that the Gaza conflict is part of a wider regional conflict, which is with Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

It is rooted in the expanding self-esteem of the Arab countries and the non-recognition of Israel. The lack of a lasting ceasefire or peace is not only the result of the current conflicts, but also the result of complex interactions between ideological and geopolitical dimensions. It is extremely important to mention the ideological factor again, since Hamas and other Iranian proxies reject negotiations with the Jewish state on religious-ideological grounds, and even aim to destroy it. On the other hand, the rightward shift in Israeli domestic politics excludes political compromise with terrorist organizations that want its downfall.

The factuality requires us to mention the growing political weight of religious Zionism in Israeli coalitions (especially in the period after 2023) that emphasizes the ideology of a unified Land of Israel. According to these political forces, the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea belongs to Israel, which, in their belief, excludes the creation of a lasting, viable Palestinian state.

Iran, Qatar, and, more recently, the anti-Israeli Turkish policy are intervening in local conflicts and have transformed the nature of the conflict into a proxy war. Moreover, currently, the 20-point peace plan branded with Donald Trump's name has only achieved a fragile ceasefire. Important elements such as the disarmament of Hamas, the creation of a financial fund for the reconstruction of Gaza, and the deployment of an international force in the zone have not been implemented. Without these, even keeping the ceasefire alive is doubtful.

On the one hand, the Trump peace plan could be an illusion. Just look at who did NOT take part in its creation, for example, Saudi Arabia and Iran are two important regional players, but India, China, and Russia did not participate in the process either, so it can be predicted that this plan will be just one of many failed attempts. The still unresolved conflict also provides Israel with many important lessons.

At the same time, we are used to the fact that nothing is set in stone in the Middle East. There will be elections in Israel, and Fatah is also looking for Abbas's successor. On May 15, he liquidated Izz ad-Din al-Haddad, the last Hamas commander in Gaza who participated in the October 7 attack and opposed the peace process. This may have removed a personal obstacle to moving to the second phase of the peace process. In addition, regional actors such as Egypt and Qatar, who are willing to support Donald Trump's peace plan, may be able to achieve a continuation of reconciliation.

It is almost certain that the Jewish state will have to re-establish its security policy, because deterrence did not work in the case of October 7th, can it work at all against fanatics who desire martyrdom? The intelligence agencies were unable to signal Hamas's intention to attack in a way that would allow the top leadership to make the appropriate decision. On the other hand, the defence system that was thought to be impenetrable was very penetrable through asymmetric methods, and Israel was left defenceless, albeit briefly, because there were no significant deployable military forces near the Gaza Strip. All this highlights the responsibility of the political leadership, not least Benjamin Netanyahu personally.

REFERENCES

1. ABC Net Australia (2004, January 20): Israel targets Hamas cleric for 'liquidation.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2004-01-20/israel-targets-hamas-cleric-for-liquidation/122374>
2. Beyond The Horizon, MENA Task Force (2025, October 14): A Turning Point in the Middle East? The Strategic Stakes of the Gaza Peace Plan. <https://behorizon.org/a-turning-point-in-the-middle-east-the-strategic-stakes-of-the-gaza-peace-plan/>
3. B'Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (2010 September 27): 10 years to the second Intifada – summary of data https://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20100927
4. Counterterrorism Center (2014). Terrorist Groups. Hamas. <https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/hamas.html>
5. Des Roshes, D. (2025, July 17): How Hamas Changed Its Strategy Before October 7. Arab Center, Washington DC. <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-changing-nature-of-israel-hamas-warfare/>
6. Department of State (2000): The Oslo Accords and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process. Office of the Historian. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/oslo>
7. De Luce, D., Cavazuti, L., (2023, October 25): Gaza is plagued by poverty, but Hamas has no shortage of cash. Where does it come from? <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/gaza-plagued-poverty-hamas-no-shortage-cash-come-rcna121099>
8. DW (2012, July 12): Israel completes 'iron wall' along Gaza border. Conflicts/Israel. <https://www.dw.com/en/israel-completes-iron-wall-along-gaza-border/a-60050902>)
9. Eissa, S. (2025, June 2): Q&A: What do Israel's shifting tactics in Gaza tell us about what's ahead? <https://acleddata.com/qa/qa-what-do-israels-shifting-tactics-gaza-tell-us-about-whats-ahead-0>
10. Ebner, J., Kavanagh, C., Whitehouse, H., (2025, August, 22): Is There a Language of Terrorists? A Comparative Manifesto Analysis. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism. ISSN: 1057-610X, Vol. 48, 2025. Issue 6. pp. 601-628.
11. European Union Security and Defence Policy (March 2009): EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM RAFAH). Fact Sheet, PRESS - EU Council Secretariat https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/wgme/dv/13_factsheeteubamrafahversion10_/13_factsheeteubamrafahversion10_en.pdf
12. Fabian, E. (2025, September 17): Laser-based 'Iron Beam' interception system declared operational. Time of Israel. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/laser-based-iron-beam-interception-system-declared-operational/>
13. Federation of American Scientists: The Covenant of Hamas – Main Points <https://irp.fas.org/world/para/docs/880818a.htm>
14. Goldenberg, S. (2000, September, 29): Rioting as Sharon visits Islam holy site. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/sep/29/israel>
15. Guarnieri M., (2011, June 28): The blockade on Gaza began long before Hamas came to power. +972 Magazin. <https://www.972mag.com/the-blockade-on-gaza-began-long-before-hamas-came-to-power/>

16. Hoffman, B. (2006): Inside Terrorism (Columbia University Press)
17. Iddon, P., (2025, September 1): What is driving Egypt's troop buildup on Gaza's border?. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/egypt-rushes-military-convoys-gaza-border-tensions-israel-flare>
18. Institute for Middle East Understanding (2005, October 28): What Happened at Camp David in 2000? <https://imeu.org/resources/palestine-101/what-happened-at-camp-david-in-2000-1/353>)
19. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at Israel Intelligence' Heritage & Commemoration Center (IICC) (2007, March, 01): The nature and extent of Palestinian terrorism, 2006. <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/palestinian-terrorism-2006>
20. International Labor Organisation (2024): A Year of War in Gaza: Impacts on Employment and Livelihoods in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. October 2024, Bulletin No. 5. Published by International Labour Organization Regional Office for the Arab States, Lebanon
21. IME: What Happened at Camp David in 2000? October 28, 2005 <https://imeu.org/resources/palestine-101/what-happened-at-camp-david-in-2000-1/353>
22. Israeli Defence Forces (2024, October 6): The October 7 Massacre: Explained. Remembering the October Massacre. <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/remembering-the-october-7-massacre/the-october-7-massacre-explained/>
23. Jewish Virtual Library (2017): Hamas: General Principles and Policies <https://jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hamas-2017-document-of-general-principles-and-policies>
24. Knell, Y., Abualouf, A. (2026, May 7): Fears of renewed Gaza war as Hamas disarmament talks stall. BBC NEWS. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd6p5l3n2q3o>
25. Levitt, M., (2006): Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad (Yale University Press)
26. Magid, P., Al-Mughrabi, N., Cornwell, A. (2026, April 29): Israeli map outlines expanded zone of military control in Gaza. World News. <https://www.reuters.com/world/israeli-maps-outline-expanded-zone-military-control-gaza-2026-04-29/>
27. Marteu, E., (2017, October 18): Fatah and Hamas face huge challenges despite the reconciliation agreement.
28. Mandour, M., (2021, July 21). Egypt's Shifting Hamas Policies. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2021/07/egypts-shifting-hamas-policies>
29. Medoff, R. (2023, November 25): Mein Kampf in Gaza—and Beyond. Jewish Journal <https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/opinion/365661/mein-kampf-in-gaza-and-beyond/>
30. Mendelsohn, B., (2025, July 14): Understanding Qatar's Relationship with Hamas: A Critical Exploration of State-Sponsored Terrorism. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism. ISSN: 1057-610X, Published by Routledge on 14 July 2025). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2025.2528342>
31. Mohammad, L. (2023, October 19): Children make up nearly half of Gaza's population. Here's what it means for the war. NPR, Middle East Conflict. <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/19/1206479861/israel-gaza-hamas-children-population-war-palestinians>
32. Momani, B., (2012, November 22): With Gaza Ceasefire, Egypt's Morsi Becomes A Serious Player. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/with-gaza-ceasefire-egypts-morsi-becomes-a-serious-player/>
33. Regular, A., (2004, November 10): Sources: Suha Arafat Rejects \$2 Million Settlement From Palestinian Authority. Haaretz. November 10, 2004. <https://www.haaretz.com/2004-11-10/ty-article/sources-suha-arafat-rejects-2-million-settlement-from-palestinian-authority/0000017f-e16d-d75c-a7ff-fdedd3670000>
34. Dr. Rubin, U. (2011, October 24): Iron Dome in Action: A Preliminary Evaluation. BESA Center. <https://besacenter.org/iron-dome-in-action-a-preliminary-evaluation/>
35. Samir, A., (2026, January 12): How Egypt's Zad Al-Izza Became Gaza's Strategic Lifeline <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/144444/How-Egypt%E2%80%99s-Zad-Al-Izza-Became-Gaza%E2%80%99s-Strategic-Lifeline>
36. Soliman, M., 2017, November 9.): Cairo and the Reconfiguration of the Palestinian Landscape. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/cairo-and-reconfiguration-palestinian-landscape>.
37. Sher, G., Ofek, L., Winter, O. (2017): The Hamas Document of Principles: Can a Leopard Change Its Spots? Strategic Assessment, Volume 20, Nr 2. July 2017. pp. 85-97

38. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (October 9, 2005): Hamas Tactics: Lessons from recent attacks, Policy Watch 522, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/hamass-tactics-lessons-recent-attacks>
39. TOI STAFF: (2026, May 8): Poll: 42% of Likud voters considering or have decided to back a different party in the fall. Times of Israel. https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/poll-42-of-likud-voters-considering-or-have-decided-to-back-different-party-in-fall/
40. UN World Population Review (2023): Gaza. Palestine. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/cities/palestine/gaza>
41. Wermenbol, G., (2019): Disrupting a delicate status quo: The Hamas crackdown on Salafi-jihadists. Middle East Institute, October 22, 2019. <https://mei.edu/publication/disrupting-delicate-status-quo-hamas-crackdown-salafi-jihadists/>
42. Zanotti, J., Sharp, J., M., (2024): Israel and Hamas Conflict In Brief: Overview, U.S. Policy, and Options for Congress, October 4, 2024. Published by Congressional Research Center