

# **There is only 1 viable path for Gaza**

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 26.01.2025

When a force's role is simple and clear, even within a complex overall plan - this embodies the principle of "simplicity," established as one of the IDF's core combat principles. This holds true at all levels, becoming increasingly vital as complexity grows. In the intricate reality that has emerged in Gaza, where issues of the ceasefire agreement, resumption of fighting, return of hostages, and "the day after" are intertwined, clarity becomes essential for achieving both military and political objectives while maintaining domestic and international legitimacy. Israel's strategic security objective in Gaza can be defined in a single word: demilitarization. No philosophical debates or confusion needed.

## **Hamas begins rehabilitation**

The ceasefire agreement has breathed new fighting spirit into Hamas' leadership and members. "This is the result of our people's steadfast stance over more than 15 months," declared Khalil al-Hayya - head of Hamas' political bureau who led the organization's negotiating team. The source promised the struggle would continue until complete victory.

We must assume Hamas in Gaza isn't resting on its laurels and has already begun rehabilitating its military capabilities. They will exploit the ceasefire to revitalize their personnel, smuggle and manufacture weapons, reassert control over the population, and maximize political gains from the release of operatives in Gaza, the West Bank, and regionally.

In any reality, Israel cannot allow the existence of combat forces, means, and military capabilities that threaten its citizens' security. Complete demilitarization of Gaza means denying Hamas and other organizations their military operational capabilities. This doesn't negate efforts to topple Hamas' rule, but clarifies that ideas like "a Palestinian national unity government" or "international management committee" presented as alternatives to this regime won't be acceptable to Israel until demilitarization is achieved. The defense establishment's role will be to destroy existing capabilities and prevent their long-term renewal. The pursuit of demilitarization will be the compass guiding all

efforts in this arena, at least for the foreseeable future.

## **The Gazafication of Jenin**

And not just in Gaza. Operation Iron Wall currently underway in the Jenin sector reminds us of the Gazafication process this area has undergone. For the umpteenth time, the IDF returns to this terror incubator to remove threats limiting its operational freedom, strike terror infrastructure, and arrest operatives. This time it comes shortly after Palestinian Authority mechanisms conducted an operation of unusual scope in this area, “Defending the Homeland,” lasting about six weeks. Elite PA units participated, and from declarations surrounding it, one might have thought a new dawn was about to break in Jenin. The operation ended with reconciliation between the mechanisms and the “Jenin Battalion,” providing another proof of the PA’s limited capabilities. This is the same “Authority” that some believe could, in an “improved version,” be the solution to Gaza’s problem.

In any case, what’s happening in Jenin reflects rising tensions across the West Bank following the signing of the Gaza ceasefire agreement. Hamas spokespeople are riding the wave of joy and elation following the release of operatives from Israel and calling for “escalation of resistance” from the West Bank. The fact that those released belong to all organizations contributes to the national image Hamas strives to cultivate. Into this fire, additional oil is poured by those senior officials abroad whom Israel’s hand didn’t reach in this war, like Zaher Jabarin who declared on *Al-Jazeera*: “Just as we defeated Netanyahu in Gaza, we will defeat him in the West Bank.”

Despite the declared ceasefire in various arenas, the days ahead are far from promising quiet. Amid the joy over the hostages’ return and alongside diplomatic activity with the Trump administration, the refreshing and reorganization of combat forces, it’s appropriate to maintain the alertness and operational sharpness we’ve adopted over the past 15 months. We can assume we’ll need them.

Published in Israel Hayom, January 26, 2025.