

With Trump, there is an historic opportunity in Gaza

written by Gilad Erdan | 03.02.2025

President Donald Trump has declared his intention to end the wars in the Middle East. However, in his meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the two leaders will have to address the ticking time bomb that remains in Gaza under the rule of the Hamas. The challenge: preventing Gaza from once again becoming a terrorist base that will spark the next war.

Trump has already proven he is willing to shatter past norms and embrace innovative solutions. This time, Netanyahu must also bring fresh “out-of-the-box” ideas to the table.

Israel must look reality in the eye: Even after the recent ceasefire agreement, Hamas still has approximately 20,000 fighters and dozens of miles of tunnels in Gaza. The terrorist organization is already working to rebuild its capabilities and train a new generation of terrorists. Therefore, Netanyahu must make it clear to Trump that rebuilding Gaza equates to rebuilding Hamas. Any reconstruction of the Strip must be limited to the bare minimum.

The danger is immediate. Make no mistake - every mechanism established to monitor materials entering Gaza has failed in the past and will fail again in preventing Hamas from using them to restore its military capabilities.

Israel and the US must send a clear message to the Arab world: As long as Hamas controls Gaza, another war is only a matter of time, and any investment in reconstruction will be wasted, just as it has been in the past.

During his conversation with Trump, Netanyahu must also warn against the illusion of a “technocratic government” in Gaza. As seen with the so-called “Gaza Health Ministry” and the UNRWA agency, no professional body can exist in Gaza without being controlled by terrorists. As long as Hamas remains the dominant armed force in the Strip, it will ultimately control any civilian authority established there.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) cannot be the solution either. Not only does the PA

continue to pay salaries to terrorists and fail to prevent attacks from its territory, but it is also clear that just as Hamas expelled the PA from Gaza in 2007, the same would happen again if the PA were entrusted with security responsibilities in the Strip.

Trump must be told that there may be no choice but to establish a temporary Israeli military-civil administration in Gaza. No other entity aside from Israel will be willing to fight Hamas over the long term. Only an Israeli military administration can dismantle Hamas' armed control and lay the groundwork for a local civilian alternative that could gain strength in the future.

Preventing reconstruction will not only hinder Hamas' ability to rebuild its military infrastructure, but it will also send a clear message to Gaza's population that as long as Hamas remains in power and committed to terrorism, there is no future for the Strip. Additionally, it will signal to Islamist terrorist supporters, who were emboldened by Hamas' recent hostage deal, that there is a heavy price to be paid for launching murderous attacks against Israel.

Breaking conventions

Trump's proposal to incentivize and facilitate voluntary emigration from Gaza to third countries is not only revolutionary, it may be the only idea that could lead to sustainable stability and offer Gazans a better future.

Some may argue that encouraging Gaza's residents to emigrate is unrealistic. But it is worth remembering that before the Abraham Accords were signed, "experts" such as then-US Secretary of State John Kerry insisted that peace agreements between Israel and Arab states were impossible without first establishing a Palestinian state.

Ultimately, when there is a determined President willing to break conventions and advance shared interests with regional states, the impossible becomes possible.

Regarding Iran, an equally pressing issue, it is necessary to reach an understanding with the US on restoring the maximum pressure campaign. This includes demanding that European nations activate the snapback mechanism to reinstate crippling sanctions on Tehran. However, this time, it is also crucial to persuade Trump to present an immediate military threat to the ayatollah regime.

Furthermore, Israel and the US must reach an agreement on joint measures to provide direct support to opposition forces in Iran working toward regime change.

By thinking outside the box and embracing new ideas, it will be possible in the coming years to bring about a historic transformation that will ensure Israel's security for generations and stabilize the entire Middle East.

Published in Israel Hayom, February 03, 2025.