

# Policy Paper: Alternatives for a Political Directive for the Civilian Population in Gaza

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## Executive summary

1. The State of Israel is required to bring about a significant change in the civilian reality in the Gaza Strip in light of Hamas's crimes that have led to the "Iron Swords" war. Accordingly, it must decide on the state's goal regarding the civilian population in Gaza to be pursued concurrently with the removal of Hamas rule.
2. The goal defined by the government requires intensive action to gain the support of the United States and other countries for this objective.
3. Basic guidelines for working under each directive:
  1. Eliminate the Hamas regime.
  2. Evacuating the population outside of the combat zone, for the benefit of the residents of the Strip.
  3. International aid should be planned and implemented according to the chosen directive.
  4. Each directive should involve a deep process of implementing ideological change (denazification).
  5. The chosen directive will support the political goal regarding the future of the strip and the endgame of the war.
4. This document will present three possible alternatives as directives of the political echelon in Israel regarding the future of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip.

Each directive will be examined in light of the following characteristics:

1. **Operability** – the ability to implement operationally.
2. **Legitimacy** – international/internal/legal.

3. **The ability to bring about ideological perceptual change** among the population with respect to Jews and Israel.
  4. **Broad strategic** consequences.
5. The three alternatives that have been examined are as follows:
1. Alternative A: The population remains in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority rule is imported.
  2. Alternative B: The population remains in Gaza and a local Arab administration is fostered.
  3. Alternative C: The evacuation of the civilian population from Gaza to Sinai.
6. From a thorough review of the alternatives, the following insights emerge:
1. **Alternative C is the one that yields positive and long-term strategic results for Israel, but is a challenging one to implement. It requires determination on the part of the political echelon in the face of international pressure, with an emphasis on rallying the support of the United States and other pro-Israel countries for the operation.**
  2. Alternatives A and B suffer from significant drawbacks, particularly in terms of their strategic implications and the lack of long-term feasibility. Both alternatives will not provide the necessary deterrent effect, will not enable a transformation of consciousness, and may lead to the same problems and threats that Israel has dealt with from 2007 to the present.
  3. Alternative A is the riskiest option, as the division of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza is one of the main obstacles to the establishment of a Palestinian state. **Choosing this alternative implies an unprecedented victory for the Palestinian national movement, a victory that comes at the cost of thousands of Israeli citizens and soldiers and does not guarantee Israel's security.**

**Alternative A: The civilian population remains in Gaza and the rule of the Palestinian Authority (PA) is imported**

## **Location and Governance:**

1. The majority of the population remains in Gaza.
2. Initial Israeli military governance; later on, the importation of the PA and its establishment as the governing authority in Gaza.

## **Operational Implications:**

1. Requires combat in a densely populated area, involving risks to our soldiers and a substantial amount of time.
2. The longer the intensive fighting continues, the higher the risk of opening a second front in the north.
3. The Gazan Arab population will resist the imposition of PA rule (as previously attempted).
4. Humanitarian responsibility is placed solely on Israel upon the conclusion of the war with all the implications.

## **International/Legal Legitimacy:**

1. At first glance, it appears to be a less severe humanitarian alternative, making it easier to gain broad support. However, in practice, the alternative involving the retention of the population may be the worst, as one can expect many Arab casualties during the operational stage, as long as the population remains in the cities and is engaged in combat.
2. Prolonged implementation time, and along with it the period in which images of civilians affected by the conflict are publicized.
3. The presence of Israeli military rule over the Arab population will complicate Israel's ability to maintain broad international support and may lead to pressure for the establishment of PA governance.

## **Bringing about an Ideological Change**

1. It is essential to shape a public narrative that internalizes the failure and moral injustice of the Hamas movement and replaces the old perception with a moderate Islamic ideology. This process is similar to denazification in Germany and Imperial

Japan. Among other things, it is crucial to write the curriculum for schools and enforce their use on an entire generation.

2. Integrating the PA (Palestinian Authority) will greatly complicate the creation of study materials that legitimize Israel. Even now, the PA's curriculum, much like those of Hamas, instills hatred and animosity towards Israel.
3. While it is possible to condition the importation of PA material on Israeli dictation of written study materials, there is no guarantee that this will happen, as the PA is fundamentally opposed to Israel.
4. One can assess that the PA will not act resolutely to shape a public narrative that exposes Hamas' failure and moral injustice or promote a moderate Islamic ideology.
5. Even today, there is substantial public support for Hamas in the West Bank. The PA leadership is widely seen as corrupt and ineffectual, losing ground to Hamas in terms of public support.

## **Strategic Implications**

1. The PA is a malevolent entity for Israel that stands on the brink of disaster. Strengthening it could result in a strategic loss for Israel.
2. The divide between the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza is one of the major obstacles today to the establishment of a Palestinian state. It is inconceivable that the outcome of this attack will be an unprecedented victory for the Palestinian nationalist movement, paving the way for the establishment of a Palestinian state.
3. The current model in the West Bank, involving Israeli military control and the civil authority of the PA, is unstable and is destined to fail. It can be tolerated in the West Bank only because of the extensive Jewish settlement in the region. This is because there is no possibility of Israeli military control without Jewish settlement (and one cannot expect the mobilization of settlement movements [for establishing Israeli settlements in Gaza] under the condition of the PA's return to Gaza).
4. There is no way to efficiently maintain a military occupation in Gaza based only on military presence, and within a short time,

there will be domestic and international pressure for withdrawal. This means that the idea will not gain long-term international legitimacy – similar to the situation in the West Bank today, only worse. Israel will be perceived as a colonial power with an occupying army. Bases and posts will be attacked, and the PA will deny any involvement.

5. **Tried and failed** – it should be explained that a plan to deliver the area to the PA and then withdraw Israeli military control was attempted in 2006 – Hamas won the elections and then seized control of the strip. There is no justification for the Israeli national military effort to occupy Gaza if, in the end, it repeats the same mistake that led to the current situation (a full-fledged war with Hamas).
6. **Deterrence** – this alternative will not produce the required deterrence against Hezbollah. On the contrary, this alternative indicates a deep Israeli weakness that will signal to Hezbollah that they will not pay a real price for a confrontation with Israel, as the latter will only carry out a similar move to the one carried out in Lebanon – a takeover for a limited time, followed by a withdrawal.
7. If the IDF fights to occupy the strip, but in the end, the political outcome is PA rule and the transformation of the strip, once again, into a hostile entity, Israel's ability to recruit combat soldiers will be critically damaged. Such a move would constitute a historical failure and an existential threat to the country's future.

## **Alternative B: The civilian population remains in Gaza and local Arab governance is fostered**

### **Location and Governance**

1. The majority of the population remains in Gaza.
2. **Governance in the initial stage** – Israeli military governance. **As an interim solution** – continuing efforts to establish a local, non-Islamist, Arab political leadership for managing civilian aspects in a structure similar to the existing government in the United Arab Emirates. **A permanent solution within this alternative does not seem to be on the horizon.**

3. Humanitarian responsibility – Israel bears full responsibility upon the conclusion of the war with all the implications.

## **Operational Implementation**

- Requires combat in a densely populated area. Involves risks to our soldiers and requires an extended period.
- The longer intense combat continues, the higher the risk of a second front opening in the north.

## **International/Legal Legitimacy**

- 1. Similar to Alternative A, this alternative will require combat in a densely populated area and will result in numerous casualties.
- 2. Prolonged implementation period, and Hamas will use this to propagate images of ‘civilians killed by Israel’.
- 3. Military rule over a civilian population will make it difficult for Israel to maintain broad international support over time.

## **Creating Ideological Change**

1. In the current situation, the absence of local opposition movements to Hamas which can be instated in power. Even if a local leadership arises in an Emirati format, they are still Hamas supporters.
2. This situation will significantly complicate the required ideological change and the weakening of Hamas as a legitimate movement. By way of comparison, in Germany’s denazification process, the post-occupation government comprised leaders who had opposed the Nazis.
3. Without a widespread local movement committed to the ideological elimination of Hamas, it will be difficult to create the necessary ideological shift.

## **Strategic Implications**

- In the short term, toppling Hamas and occupying the strip will be significant steps toward restoring Israeli deterrence and changing the reality.

- However, it appears that the deterrence effect will not be sufficient and substantial enough regarding the severity of the surprise attack [on October 7]. Moreover, the message sent to Hezbollah and Iran will not be sufficiently resolute. The strip will continue to serve as a fertile ground for influence attempts and the renewed nurturing of terror organizations. .
- It is reasonable to assume that such a move will receive the support of Gulf states due to the heavy blow dealt to the Muslim Brotherhood Movement. Nevertheless, the number of casualties among Gaza's Arab population which the process involves will make this difficult.
- In the long term, there will be both Israeli and international pressure to replace the Israeli military governance with a local Arab governance as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that the new leadership will resist the spirit of Hamas.
- A local Arab government will face great difficulty in achieving the required narrative and ideological change because an entire generation in Gaza has been educated with the ideology of Hamas, and now they will also experience Israeli military occupation. The likely scenario is not an ideological change of perception but the emergence of new, possibly even more extreme Islamist movements.
- This alternative, too, does not provide Israel with any significant long-term strategic benefit. On the contrary, it may turn out to be a strategic burden in a few years.

## **Alternative C: Evacuation of the Civilian Population from Gaza to Sinai**

### **Location and Governance**

1. Due to the ongoing combat against Hamas, there is a need to evacuate the non-combatant civilian population from the combat zone.
2. Israel will act to evacuate the civilian population to Sinai.
3. In the initial stage, tent cities will be established in the Sinai region. Subsequently, the creation of a humanitarian corridor to

assist the civilian population of Gaza and the construction of new cities in a resettlement area in Northern Sinai.

4. A sterile zone must be established several kilometers within Egypt and the return of the population to activities or residence near the Israeli border should not be allowed. This is in addition to the creation of a security perimeter within our territory near the border with Egypt.

## **Operational Implementation**

1. A call for the evacuation of the non-combatant population from the combat zone in which Israel is attacking Hamas.
2. In the first stage, aerial operations will be carried out with a focus on the northern Gaza Strip to allow for the ground maneuver into an evacuated zone that does not require combat in a densely populated civilian area.
3. In the second stage, a gradual ground maneuver will proceed from the north along the border until the entire Gaza Strip is occupied, and the underground bunkers are cleared of Hamas combatants.
4. The intensive ground maneuver stage will take less time compared to alternatives A and B, thus reducing time of exposure to the opening of a northern front concurrently with the Gaza conflict.
5. It is important to leave southward-bound transportation routes open to allow for the evacuation of the civilian population towards Rafah.

## **Legal/International Legitimacy**

1. At first glance, this alternative, which involves significant evacuation of the population, may be complex in terms of international legitimacy.
2. In our assessment, post-evacuation combat is expected to lead to fewer casualties among the civilian population compared to the expected casualties if the population remains (as in alternatives A and B).

3. Mass migration from war zones (Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine) and population movement are a natural and necessary result given the risks associated with staying in a war zone.
4. Even before the fighting, there was [high demand for emigration out of Gaza](#) among the local population, and the war is only expected to increase this demand.
5. **From a legal perspective:**

A. This is a war of defense against a terrorist organization that conducted a military invasion of Israel.

B. The demand for evacuating a non-combatant population is an accepted method that saves lives, as the Americans did in Iraq in 2003.

C. Egypt has an obligation under international law to allow the passage of the population.

6. Israel should work to promote a wide diplomatic initiative aimed at recruiting countries willing to assist the displaced population and agree to accept them as migrants.
7. A list of countries that should join this initiative can be found in appendix A to this document.
8. In the long term, this alternative is likely to gain broader legitimacy since it deals with a population that will be integrated into a state framework with citizenship.

## **Creating an Ideological Change**

1. In this alternative, too, there will be a need for an ideological shift among the population. However, Israel will not have the ability to control the plan since it is implemented outside its territory.
2. In relation to alternatives A and B, instilling a sense of failure in the population will assist in creating an improved security reality for many years and will deter this population.

## **Strategic Implications**

1. **Deterrence** – a proper response will enable the creation of meaningful deterrence throughout the region and will send a

strong message to Hezbollah not to dare to undertake a similar move in Southern Lebanon.

2. Toppling Hamas will gain the support of Gulf states. Additionally, this alternative will deal a significant and unequivocal blow [*missing... perhaps 'to the Muslim Brotherhood'*].
3. This alternative will strengthen Egyptian rule in Northern Sinai. It is important to limit the introduction of weapons into Northern Sinai and not to allow the legitimization of amendments to the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement's demilitarization articles.
4. The issue should be associated with a broader effort to denounce the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and worldwide, turning the organization into a pariah, similar to ISIS – from a legal perspective, around the world and especially in Egypt.

## **Appendix A: Countries and Entities That Can Contribute to Solving the Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza**

### **United States**

Possible contribution: Assistance in promoting the initiative vis-a-vis many countries, including exerting pressure on Egypt, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE to contribute to the initiative, either with resources or by receiving displaced persons.

Motivations: Interest in a clear Israeli victory and the restoration of Western deterrence, which has been damaged due to the attack on Israel. Restoring its global leadership and key state status in crisis resolution. Interest in creating a significant regional change and dealing a blow to the radical axis.

### **Egypt**

Possible contribution: Opening crossings and immediate reception of the population leaving Gaza and will assemble in Sinai; allocating territory for settlement; exerting diplomatic pressure on Turkey and other countries to do so of their own preference, rather than receiving a large number of displaced persons [in crisis]; a security envelope for initial organization zones outside the Gaza Strip.

Possible incentives: Pressure from the United States and European countries to take responsibility and open the Rafah crossing to Sinai; financial assistance for the current economic crisis in Egypt.

## **Saudi Arabia**

Possible contribution: Financing integration budgets [for migrants] and budget for the efforts to transfer the population to various countries; discreet funding of campaigns that present the damage caused by Hamas and damage its reputation.

Motivations: Pressure from the United States, in addition to a commitment to use the defense umbrella of the combat groups stationed in the area against Iran as an insurance policy; an interest in positioning Saudi Arabia as a helper to Muslims in times of crisis; Saudi interest in a clear Israeli victory over Hamas.

## **European countries, especially those in the Mediterranean – Greece/Spain**

Contribution: Reception and settlement [of migrants].

Incentives: Migrant integration budgets and financial support budgets for this process from Arab states.

## **Other North African countries (Morocco, Libya, Tunisia)**

Contribution: Reception and settlement; immediate support in organization zones outside the Gaza Strip.

Incentives: Migrant reception budgets and financial support budgets from Arab countries; showing Arab brotherhood; pressure from European countries; working through ties that Israel has with some of those countries in a way that allows these countries to maintain these ties without harming their image in the Arab world.

## **Canada**

Contribution: Reception of the population and its settlement within the framework of a lenient immigration policy.

## Prominent advertising agencies

Possible contribution: Campaigns that promote the plan in the Western world and the effort to resolve the crisis without inciting against, or vilifying, Israel; campaigns targeted at the non-pro-Israel world focusing on assisting Palestinian brothers and helping their recovery, even at the price of a “scolding” or even offensive tone towards Israel, intended for populations unable to accept a different message.

Specific campaigns targeting **Gaza residents themselves**, encouraging them to accept the plan – the messages should revolve around the loss of land, clarifying that there is no hope of returning to the territories Israel will occupy soon, whether it is right or not. The message should be, “Allah decided you lose this land because of Hamas’ leadership – the only option is to move to another place with the help of your Muslim brothers.”

*Translated by Ofer Neiman*

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