



Trump's Gaza: 21st-Century Imperialism in a Golden Frame

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In a rare moment of honesty from the imperial core, Trump declared, “The US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it too. We’ll own it...” This should come as no surprise. After all, Trump has repeatedly described Gaza as “incredible real estate” and “oceanfront property”. While Palestinians were burnt, starved, and suffocated under the rubble, Trump released an AI-generated video on Truth Social depicting a futuristic Gaza. The elements of the clip—such as a giant golden statue of Trump, Netanyahu and Trump sunbathing with cocktails in their hands, and bearded belly dancers—are not merely bizarre but also sinisterly honest. There is no façade of diplomacy anymore. If the lyrics of the song playing in the background stating “Trump Gaza is finally here” are not clear enough, the video clarifies it further with the shot of a resort lit up with the words “Trump Gaza” in gold. This is

strangely reminiscent of the Builder King of Belgium, Leopold II, who claimed ownership of Congo.

The lifelong real estate developer Donald Trump's vision for Gaza is similar; it is 19th-century-style annexation and colonial domination. When asked about the 2.3 million Palestinians residing in Gaza, Trump has repeatedly suggested that they would be relocated to neighbouring Arab countries, despite such forcible expulsion being illegal under international law. However, the live-streamed genocide of the Palestinians perpetuated by Israel with US arms and backing has exposed the toothlessness of the institutions that are tasked with enforcing international law. Within this context, it is no surprise that Trump's 20-point plan for Gaza was readily welcomed by the UN, with 13 votes in favour, 0 against, and Russia and China's abstention. Even the Arab and Muslim countries have widely applauded the plan.

The Legitimisation of Ethnic Cleansing: Forced Displacement in Trump's Plan

Trump's vision merely entails a continuation of the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land. Trump's previous comments from February 2025 had already made explicit what the plan's architects had attempted previously to obscure in diplomatic language: Palestinians would be forcibly "moved out" of Gaza. He has repeatedly reiterated this position with his characteristic blunt carelessness by emphasising that the relocated Palestinians would not retain the right to return since they would be "better off" in neighbouring Arab countries. By May, the Trump administration had begun working with the ICC-convicted war criminal Netanyahu government to permanently relocate one million Gazans to Libya by offering \$30 billion in frozen US funds to the Libyan government as an incentive. Netanyahu enthusiastically backed the proposal in July 2025 by calling it a matter of "free choice"—a euphemism that fails to adequately conceal the context of devastation and coercion the Palestinians face.

Legal scholars have maintained quite unambiguously that the plan is ethnic cleansing, not a humanitarian relocation, especially considering the context of the 7–8 million Palestinian refugees who cannot return to their ancestral homes, despite a recognised right to return from UN Resolution 194 that has been blocked to date by Israel. Human Rights Watch noted that Trump’s proposal would move the US from complicity in war crimes to the role of a direct perpetrator of atrocities. International law explicitly prohibits the forced displacement of populations, particularly when there is no provision for return. As Holocaust and genocide scholar Omer Bartov notes, Trump’s plan is “ethnic cleansing disguised as a humanitarian gesture.” Yet the White House and Trump himself have attempted to thinly hide their imperial ambitions behind the language of benevolence: Palestinians would be moved to “beautiful locations” with “new homes” where they could “live safely.” This, of course, is not generosity. To anyone familiar with the history of colonialism and imperialism, the infantilising, if not dehumanising, language towards Palestinians and their lack of representation in the decision making process raise several red flags.

In fact, the sheer scale of proposed displacement reveals the plan’s true ambitions. Israel’s far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has openly declared that the majority of Gaza’s 2 million population could be relocated within six months. Such a timeline exposes the coercive intentions of Israel and the US, hidden beneath the rhetoric of voluntary relocation. In fact, Palestinian public opinion regarding displacement remains far more nuanced than Trump’s selective citations may suggest. While a May 2025 poll did show 49 per cent of Palestinians expressing willingness to leave Gaza, the survey itself was methodologically flawed since it did not distinguish between temporary and permanent displacement. More critically, Gazans have repeatedly warned that leaving Gaza, even temporarily, carries the risk of permanent exile. This fear comes from Israel’s record of decades-long refusal to allow Palestinian refugees to return, in clear violation of UN resolution 194. With over 70,000 confirmed dead so far, though the final death toll has been predicted to

be almost double, as well as 1.5 million still awaiting emergency shelter, and Gaza's entire population stuffed into a devastated coastal strip of rubble and bodies, any notion of "choice" is naïve at best and maliciously deceptive at worst.

The Geographic Structure of Apartheid in US Plans for Gaza

However, the true neocolonial genius of Trump's plan lies not in its displacement scheme but in its attempt to geographically divide up Gaza. US military planning documents obtained by the Guardian reveal intentions to partition Gaza into two distinct zones: a "green zone" under Israeli and international military control and a "red zone" where Hamas would retain authority and Palestinians are confined indefinitely. Trump's plan, therefore, aims to make "the open-air concentration camp" of Gaza even smaller by essentially extracting from it the "oceanfront property" Trump plans to build his golden resorts on.

The green zone, comprising the eastern strip of Gaza along the border with Israel, has been authorised for rapid reconstruction. International contractors—foreign corporations, not Palestinian workers—will develop essential infrastructure, coordinate humanitarian efforts, and construct Trump's promised "riviera" developments, all under the supervision of the international stabilisation force and Israeli military oversight. Meanwhile, the red zone—encompassing nearly half of Gaza and housing the majority of its densely populated districts—will remain in ruins. Reconstruction in these areas is explicitly contingent on vague "security prerequisites", including "verified disarmament, stable patrol boundaries, and cleared supply routes". Given Hamas's refusal to disarm and the political deadlock almost inherent to the plan's structure, these conditions set by the US seem impossible to meet. This suggests that Palestinian reconstruction would be indefinitely postponed.

The cynicism here is staggering. Over 80 per cent of Gaza's structures are damaged or destroyed by Israel's bombardment of the strip, including nearly all schools and

hospitals. Yet the plan, as reviewed by The Guardian and other sources, explicitly restricts rebuilding to the Israeli-controlled green zone. A US official quoted in internal military documents has stated the logic with brutal candour: “Ideally, we would want [to] make it whole, but that’s aspirational.” The plan, in other words, accepts Palestinian devastation as a permanent condition and normalises mass displacement as its rational, even favourable, outcome. With almost the entire Palestinian population of 2 million concentrated in the red zone, this division guarantees neither peace nor reconstruction—only the perpetuation of apartheid.

US planners have even considered this fragmentation to be a tool for coerced resettlement of the population. The strategy explicitly envisions using reconstruction in the green zone to lure Palestinians across the Israeli-controlled “yellow line.”. As one US official stated, if “you create conditions for there [sic] significant progress in reconstruction, [Palestinians will have] Gazan civilians moving there beginning to thrive.” The plan, stripped of diplomatic euphemisms, proposes to bribe Palestinians into abandoning their homes and communities through selective development. Such an arrangement would constitute a form of structural coercion almost indistinguishable from forced expulsion. Despite its contextual differences, India should know the cost of partitions dictated by colonial powers.

The Imperial Capture of International Institutions

The UN’s endorsement of Trump’s plan represents not the triumph of multilateralism but its total capture by imperial powers. On November 3, 2025, the Security Council voted 13-2 in favour, with Russia and China abstaining rather than vetoing. There can no longer be any doubt that the vote is an abdication of responsibility that permitted imperialism to be codified into international law. This outcome was not inevitable. It reflected, instead, the systematic erosion of the Global South’s capacity to organise against imperialism in the post-Cold War era

due to its own economic and geopolitical aspirations within the current structure of inequalities inherent in the globalised market.

The Arab nations' joint endorsement—signed by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Jordan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Turkey—may at first glance suggest regional consensus. Yet this statement masks a deeper geopolitical surrender. These are the same regimes that once championed Palestinian self-determination and anti-colonial solidarity. Their embrace of Trump's plan reflects not conviction but coercion. The integration of Arab states into US-led capitalist networks, the normalisation of Israeli-Arab economic and security ties, and the systematic suppression of mass pro-Palestine sentiment among their own populations indicate that many of Palestine's staunchest allies have betrayed the cause for economic and political gains.

Israel's reliance on Arab participation in the plan's governance structures exposes this betrayal. The "international stabilisation force" (ISF), or the military backbone of the plan, has struggled to secure meaningful commitments. Turkey and the Palestinian Authority were deemed unacceptable by Netanyahu's far-right government. Only Indonesia agreed, and only with significant reservations and stipulations. The most absurd element: Tony Blair, the Iraq War architect whose hands still drip with blood, has been designated as Trump's emissary for the proposed "peace council," though he has not yet been formally confirmed. The entire governmental structure of the plan exists in a state of vagueness, which is indicative of its true nature. It should not be viewed as a coherent peace framework that guarantees "eternal peace" in the Middle East, as Trump suggests in his ridiculous pursuit of a Nobel Peace Prize; rather, it is an imperial imposition. It openly reveals the US's history of foreign policy in the region, which can only be described as bullying and shows a complete disregard for any consensus.

The Neocolonial Economy built on Dispossession

Beneath Trump's rhetoric of humanitarian reconstruction lies a familiar imperial logic: the transformation of deliberately devastated territories into zones of capitalist extraction. Trump has promised to develop Gaza as the "Riviera of the Middle East". This is a vision that owes more to the consumer spectacles of Dubai and Abu Dhabi than to Palestinian development, let alone self-determination or justice. The plan envisions special economic zones with preferential tariff rates, international capital injection, and foreign-contracted infrastructure projects.

This is imperialism's new face, and it is more exposed than ever before. While 19th-century colonialism operated through direct political control, 21st-century neocolonialism operates through economic subordination and debt dependency. Foreign corporations will profit from Gaza's reconstruction; Palestinian labour will, of course, be available at lower wages; resource extraction will proceed under international supervision; and Gaza's economy will be permanently integrated into the circuits of Western capital accumulation. Trump and Blair stand to personally benefit from these arrangements, a detail the mainstream media largely glosses over but which reveals the plan's true beneficiaries.

The contrast between the green zone's rapid development and the red zone's indefinite desolation is not accidental. It is calculated and premeditated. It's a business decision. Reconstruction confined to Israeli-controlled territory serves multiple imperial purposes: it secures Israeli control over the most valuable and strategically positioned land in Gaza; it creates economic incentives for Palestinians to relocate to the green zone and eventually out of Gaza entirely; and it establishes a permanent occupation framework that attempts to disguise itself as humanitarian assistance worthy of a Nobel Prize.

Palestinian Refusal and Resistance

Despite the plan's endorsement by the UN, Arab regimes, and Western powers, Palestinians have responded with a unified rejection that points to the plan's

fundamental illegitimacy. Hamas declared it a “recipe for continued aggression”, and refused to accept the disarmament that the plan demands. The kind of disarmament demanded by the plan would be fatal to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad condemned it as an attempt by Israel, “through the United States, to impose conditions it could not secure through military means.” Most importantly, Gazans themselves—the actual subjects of this imperial plan—have declared they will not leave. Residents, who have endured two years of genocide, have expressed their refusal to relinquish their homeland.

These are not marginal voices. They represent an indigenous population’s refusal to be moved, erased, or displaced by external powers. It echoes the cries of Native Americans, of Aboriginal nations in Australia, of the Maori in Aotearoa, and of the Mapuche in Chile. It is a reiteration of the sentiment of all protest from the indigenous people against settler-colonial erasure. In every previous cycle of Palestinian dispossession, from the ongoing Nakba of 1948 to the major displacement during the 1967 war, the failed Oslo Accords, and the current large-scale ethnic cleansing, the structure has remained similar: external powers impose solutions while Palestinians have no seat at the negotiating table. Trump’s 20-point plan continues this pattern by rendering Palestinians into mere objects of international deliberation rather than subjects of their liberation. The international acceptance of this plan is reminiscent of the 1884-85 Berlin Conference, when European colonial powers collectively handed the Congo to the Builder King of Belgium.

The international socialist movement has clearly articulated what mainstream discourse tends to obscure: no imperialist peace plan—with or without UN resolution—can achieve genuine peace so long as it perpetuates the structures of occupation, apartheid, dispossession, and Palestinian subordination. The Oslo Accords, imposed over 30 years ago with similar claims of inevitability, produced not Palestinian statehood but the further solidification of occupation and the

expansion of Israeli settlements (explicitly considered illegal under international law.) The 20-point peace plan promises the same, if not worse, outcome, only now with more callous Trump honesty.

Conclusion

It is noteworthy that Trump's Gaza plan is not an aberration in imperial practice; it is its perfection. Where 19th-century empires spoke frankly of conquest and extraction, 21st-century neocolonialism has disguised domination in the language of peace, development, and humanitarian necessity. Trump, in his distinctive bluntness, has stripped away the diplomatic veil: Gaza is "real estate" to be owned, Palestinians are obstacles to be displaced, and reconstruction is a profit opportunity. The AI video with Trump sipping cocktails while golden statues gleam in the Gaza sun is not a grotesque exception to the plan's logic but rather its true face.

For over 130 years—from the Balfour Declaration of 1917, through the UN Partition Plan of 1947, to Trump's 2025 proposal—external powers have decided Palestine's future without Palestinian consent. Each new iteration claims to be the final solution to an "intractable conflict," yet it seems to perpetuate the fundamental structure of neocolonial and imperial injustice. The Global South's abandonment of anti-imperialist solidarity, evident in Arab states' endorsement of the plan, should not be confused with a recognition of the plan's merit but rather the ultimate success of neocolonialism: imperialism that operates through economic integration, security partnerships, and the co-optation of post-colonial elites.

The only resistance that matters is the resistance already unfolding: the Palestinians' refusal to leave their land, the international solidarity movements organising strikes and blockades worldwide, and the Palestinian people's insistence that no plan imposed by Washington will replace their right to self-determination. Against empire's "peace", there stands the necessity of liberation and justice. And

history—from Algeria to South Africa—shows that it has never been negotiated with imperialists but wrested from them through collective struggle. As Mahmoud Darwish writes, “We have one aim and one aim only: to continue to be.”

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