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## Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

### Forced Displacement for Urban Regeneration - Gaza Strip Case

#### Kentsel Yenileme İçin Zorunlu Göç - Gazze Şeridi Örneği

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#### ÖZ

Bu makale, Gazze Şeridi'nin tarihsel sürecini ve yakın dönem gelişmelerini inceleyerek, İsrail'in 2023 yılında gerçekleştirdiği askeri operasyonların sonuçlarını ele almakta; ortaya çıkan yaygın yıkım ve kitlesel yerinden edilmenin, silahlı çatışmanın tali bir sonucu değil, mekânsal ve demografik yeniden yapılandırmaya yönelik kasıtlı bir strateji olarak değerlendirilebileceğini savunmaktadır. Saha verileri, akademik çalışmalar, hukuki analizler ve insan hakları kuruluşlarının belgelerine dayanarak, Gazze nüfusunun büyük çoğunluğunun zorla yerinden edilmesinin yalnızca insani bir acil durum olmadığı; sömürgeci genişleme mantığı ile kâr odaklı liberal kentsel dönüşümün birleştiği bir stratejiyle uyumlu olduğu gösterilmektedir. Güncel gelişmelerin on yıllardır süregelen askeri müdahale, denetim ve katı mekânsal yönetim politikalarıyla ilişkilendirilmesi yoluyla, çalışma; şiddetin, toplumsal çözülmenin ve yeniden inşanın kasıtlı tahakküm araçları olarak birlikte işlediğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Araştırma, savaş sırasında gerçekleşen yıkımın, yerel halkın acil ihtiyaçlarını karşılamaya yönelik planlar geliştirilmesinden ziyade, yeni başlangıçlar söylemi altında büyük ölçekli kentsel yenileme fırsatları olarak sunulduğunu göstermektedir. Bu girişimler, yatırımcılara yönelik alanlar, güvenlik temelli ticaret koridorları ve lüks konut bölgeleri yaratmayı hedeflemekte; bu süreç ise Filistinli nüfusun kaçınılmaz biçimde yerinden edilmesi pahasına kurgulanmaktadır.

Makale, Gazze'nin geleceğinin günümüzde silahlı güç, sınırlı ve denetimli insani yardım ile esasen ekonomik kâra odaklanan kentsel projeler tarafından şekillendirildiğini ileri sürmektedir. Bu yaklaşım, uzun vadede nüfus yapısını ve kimliği kalıcı biçimde dönüştürme riski taşımakta; toprak, geri dönüş ve kendi kaderini tayin eden kentsel yaşam haklarını aşındırmaktadır. Çalışma, toparlanma sürecinin adalet temelli olması gerektiğini vurgulamakta; Filistinli toplulukların ihtiyaç ve vizyonlarını önceleyen, tarihsel ve kültürel bağlamı gözeten ve insan haklarını merkezine alan bir yeniden inşa yaklaşımı çağrısında bulunmaktadır.

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#### ABSTRACT

This article examines the Gaza Strip's history and recent events, highlighting the consequences of Israel's 2023 military operations, which revealed broad destruction and large-scale displacement, arguing that it can be seen as intentional -not a side effect element- of spatial and demographic restructuring. Using field data, academic articles, legal analysis, and other documentation from human rights organizations, it shows how the forced displacement of the majority of Gaza's population is more than an emergency, it is a strategy aligning with the colonial expansion combined and profit-based, liberal urban transformation. By linking current events to decades of incursion, control, and strict territorial management policies, the study demonstrates how violence, community disruption, and reconstruction function jointly as tools of intentional dominance.

The research shows wartime destruction being advertised as new opportunities that can lead to large urban regeneration through schemes that are framed as new beginnings, rather than drawing plans to provide the necessary aid to local residents. These initiatives are based on creating zones for investors, secure trade corridors, and luxury housing options on the inevitable expense of displacing the Palestinian populations. The article argues that Gaza's future is now being shaped by armed power, restricted aid, and urban projects focused mainly on economic profit, which will eventually, alter the population, identity permanently, eroding rights to territory, return, and self-determined city life or fabric. It emphasizes that recovery must happen through justice, prioritizing Palestinian community needs and visions, and preserving human rights within the historical and cultural frames.

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## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, document and evidence-based research methodology that integrates critical analysis, structured framework, and interpretive thematic writings together, to examine the relationship between forced displacement, war-resulted destruction, and post-conflict urban regeneration plans for Gaza. The research relies on peer-reviewed academic articles, UN agencies' reports, human rights organizations documents, and official analytical reports. Sources were inspected and selected based on several criteria that served the overall context of the work, such as academic legitimacy of the source, credibility of the author, the publishing party, and the relevancy to the study subject. This led to dividing the source into several main categories:

Region and context related sources that explained the regional historic, political, and geographical relativity to the study, showing the background of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, historical dimensions of the strip, economic and political analysis of the strip, the region, and the surrounding countries. From which are (Agha, Esson, Griffiths, & Joronen, 2024), (Jamil, Salman, Kalbi, Sajjad, & Ahmed, 2024), (Montserrat & Carucí, 2025).

Descriptive and conflict monitoring sources particularly those issued by UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, or research centres, which provides primary documentation and numbers of displacement patterns, destruction of infrastructure, and humanitarian situation related observations and reported needs, describing the conflict impact and consequences on the different aspects of life and urban fabric in the strip and among the strip affected populations. From which are (HRW, 2024), (Culbertson, et al., 2025), (Randles, 2024), (Aldabbour, et al., 2025), (Espejo, et al., 2025).

Analytical sources arguing the aftermaths and effects of the war-tolls on the urban structure, future urban planning, and possible forced displacement of the people of Gaza Strip, analysing the public policies both the United States and Israel are announcing regarding the strip war and the plans for after the war reconstruction period, showcasing the means and reasons behind these plans, and studying the external policies impact on the people of Gaza's current humanitarian situation and commitments and their relation to the land and location. From which are (Ajour, 2024), (Anidi Ali, 2024), (Soliman, 2025), (Mousavi & Sani, 2025).

These selected resources were examined carefully, then used through direct comparison in order to form the main concept of this study, drawing conclusions directly from the author's understanding and analytical perspectives of each one of them, assessing data progressively, forming judgments solely when evidence aligns.

## Introduction

The Gaza Strip is a narrow coastal enclave along the Mediterranean Sea, it is part of the Palestinian coastal line in the western part of the country, it forms, along with the western bank, the two territorial parts of the state of Palestine and it is governed under an exclusive role since 2006. It was known historically as a site of profound geopolitical, cultural, and economic significance, its location gave it huge importance in trade and travel, and it has experienced several waves of foreign control, from Egyptian, until Islamic rulers, and Israeli occupation.

Gaza witnessed a full wartime exposure in 2023 after the 7<sup>th</sup> of October events. The war exposed the means Israel are willing to use on the strip, causing damage never seen before. The urban fabric was practically erased and whole city areas were flattened, huge numbers in civilians loses, famine forced by blockades and deliberate nutrition shortages, services such as power, water, and hospitals stopped working or vanished completely, while families' connections were shattered under endless forced moves. The devastating war cracked Gaza's foundations open, altering everyday existence, and pushing people out of their homes into an certain refuge areas already packed beyond their capacity (HRW, 2024, p. 4). This unimaginable force used in the Gaza war often linked in the Israeli official statements to the 7<sup>th</sup> of October event directly, saying that this was the only available option to eliminate terrorism and neutralize the strip from Hamas's presence and agenda to guarantee the Israeli safety thereafter. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu referenced biblical Amalek, stating, "*Wipe out the memory of Amalek*", and vowed "*revenge that the devil has not created*". (Bar-Tal, 2025, p. 3)

Multiple displacement movements were forced on Gazans, often using claims about security, and risk minimizing, and were described as urgent steps so military troops can operate freely under legal grounds. Because of these claims, moving civilians out by force appeared not as harm act but rather as part of anti-terror strategy, temporary, yet required (Abraham, 2023, p. 4). However, while the humanitarian crisis was still at its peak in the strip, plans for reconstruction reappeared and started to gain momentum, showing a mismatch between the official claims and the hidden economic goals. Gradually, officials started referring to Gaza as a free unused space, open for business once fighting stops, and instead of providing aid or reconstruction plans, the visions focused on profitable proposals such as beachfront resorts, high-end hotels, tourist hubs, and city upgrades meant to attract capital more than residents (Bshara, 2025, p. 65). All this talk emerged precisely when food shortages spread, shelters overflowed, and basic systems broke down. This brought up key doubts about the war's initial aim, and whether it was a genuine response resulting after October 7<sup>th</sup> events and purely aiming to enhance the Israeli security and safety tactics or it was used as a tool to speed up a part of a bigger inevitable plan tied to Israel's settler colonial and neoliberal market-focused regional growth goals.

This article will mainly focus on studying the hidden or announced reasons behind the 2023 war on Gaza, first by exploring the strip's history and putting it into its regional frame, then by describing the war impacts on various geopolitical, humanitarian, or physical aspects, and linking this resulted impact with analytical overview of the official Israeli narrative and observed and evidence-based strategies and economic benefit, in order to draw, more clearly, to outline of the war's purposes and consequences. The article argues that data analyzed after the sequence of events and the expected and measurable consequences, will suggest more relatable and applicable recommendation to end the war and practice proper urban regeneration in the strip, taking in consideration the affected population's needs and priorities, and their expectation of what is the shape of the scenario the war will end up with, advocating for long-term, people-oriented suggestions, and not prioritizing the future investment projects over the

human life.

### **Background on Gaza Strip's Recent History**

After World War I ended, world geopolitics shifted dramatically, changing how power was distributed across nations. In the Middle East, one major outcome stemmed from the fall of the Ottoman Empire after the war, which allowed European powers to step in via occupation and mandated rule. Instead of independence, many areas fell under British or French authority for years, altering borders, institutions, and posing sovereign rights. Under these conditions, Britain took charge of Palestine through an official League of Nations mandate; this move has entrenched foreign oversight, introduced colonial administrative methods to the country of Palestine, and triggered long-term instability affecting both people and land.

The British rule in Palestine (1917–1948) shifted Gaza from a distant region into a key zone of population change. New laws, property rules, and boundaries introduced by Britain disrupted traditional land connections, cutting Gaza off from surrounding areas. At the same time, rising Jewish immigration, supported by the biased land decisions making from British colonial authorities, deepened the conflict and broke up the connected territories throughout Palestine. These acts reached a breaking point during the 1948 war, known as the Nakba, when the new State of Israel was established, and the land of Palestine as announced to be its national land. More than 700,000 Palestinians left or were forced out of their homes, which led to a permanent displacement that altered Palestine and the surrounding region demographics ever since, and heavily affected Gaza's people social structure. Gaza was later placed under direct Israeli control, and came to represent not just physical refuge, but a political status in the country and region history (Nijim, 2024, p. 5).

Israel in general, was considered to be practicing in Palestine what is called the "*settler colonialism*", occupying the land in purpose to free it from its authentic people and replace them with what it saw more convenience for each case, new investments, new migration from western countries, or perhaps, settlers coming from other parts of Israel. Such colonial policies were thoroughly explained in Wolfe's works who argues that settler colonialism is a structure, not an event, driven by a persistent logic of elimination, and unlike classical colonialism, which exploits indigenous labor; settler colonialism seeks to remove indigenous peoples to secure land permanently. Elimination, in this case, operates through multiple modalities: physical violence, displacement, assimilation, legal erasure, and spatial replacement. (Wolfe, 2006, p. 401)

This continued to comply on the Israeli occupation of Gaza in 1967, where the strip entered a prolonged era of settler colonial strategies deeply intertwined with what is called "*urban spatiality*", which is, as described by Spinks, shows how fear, security discourse, and crime narratives are mobilized to justify spatial segregation and exclusionary urban design. Which affected the Israeli approaches toward intervening in Gaza's urbanization, shaping the strip form through walls, buffer zones, gated communities, and surveillance infrastructures. These practices normalize unequal access to space and legitimize the confinement or removal of racialized and marginalized populations (Spinks, 2001, p. 16). This period was described as spatial apartheid, a deliberate reorganization of the built environment and urban functionality to facilitate Israeli security imperatives while restricting Palestinian spatial mobility, autonomy, and visibility. (Agha, Esson, Griffiths, & Joronen, 2024, p. 6)

The first and second Intifadas (1987–1993 and 2000–2005) represented pivotal moments of organized resistance against the Israeli occupation that were deeply embedded in Gaza's spatial and social fabric. Refugee camps such as Jabalia, Beach Camp, and Khan Younis were not only dense living quarters but also became incubators for grassroots mobilization, youth organizing, and cultural resistance. These environments, densely populated,

marginalized, and often overlooked by formal governance, fostered resilient community networks that transformed sites of displacement into engines of resistance. Informal economies, neighbourhood associations, and underground political movements became central to sustaining resistance under siege. Israel's strategic was to target these areas through successive military operations, such Operation Cast Lead (2008–09), Operation Pillar of Defence (2012), Operation Protective Edge (2014), and the intensified wars of 2021 (Harvey, 2025, p. 641). This policy sought to eliminate not only physical structures but also the social memory, political consciousness, and intergenerational resilience embedded in Gaza's built environment.

In 2005 Israel announced what it was called "*disengagement deal*" often presented in international discourse as the termination of Israeli occupation to Gaza Strip, constituted instead a tactical transformation of control mechanisms. However, Israel maintained its hold over critical dimensions of sovereignty, airspace, territorial waters, border crossings, and fiscal channels, thus tightening its grip through remote governance and siege (Dos Santos & Nasser, 2024, p. 260). This was described to be closer to is called a "*mobility regime*" which is theorized by Shamir as "*premised upon a pervasive "paradigm of suspicion" that conflates the perceived threats of crime, immigration, and terrorism, thus constituting a conceptual blueprint for the organization of global risk-management strategies*". (Shamir, 2005, p. 1), only in this case, Palestinians in Gaza are trapped in place, unable to move freely within or beyond the territory, rendering displacement itself a paradoxical and weaponized condition.

### **The 2023's Israeli War on Gaza**

The 2023 war on Gaza was triggered by the October 7 Hamas-led coordinated attacks against Israel, which involved an unprecedented breach of the Gaza-Israel barrier, the firing of thousands of rockets into Israeli territory, and the capture of more than two hundred hostages, both civilians and soldiers (Garcés & Porfirione, 2024, p. 2; HRW, 2024, p. 4), and later rapidly escalated into one of the most lethal and destructive episodes in the Strip's modern history. Within few hours, Israel launched an unprecedented, combined offensive attack, involving continuous aerial bombardment, heavy artillery shelling, and a multi-front ground invasion that struck densely populated urban districts, refugee camps, and critical infrastructure hubs. The military campaign expanded to systematically dismantle telecommunications networks, administrative headquarters, markets, and humanitarian aid convoys, compounding civilian hardship. In under a month, over 1.9 million residents, about 85% of Gaza's population, were forcibly displaced multiple times, as whole neighbourhoods and quarters were obliterated (HRW, 2024, p. 4). Civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, desalination plants, water treatment facilities, and power stations, faced repeated and deliberate targeting, accelerating the near-total collapse of essential services and public health systems. The confirmed death toll surpassed 30,000, with tens of thousands wounded and thousands more unaccounted for under the rubble (Rana, 2024, p. 15). Multiple ceasefire initiatives, mediated by Egypt, Qatar, and the United States, framed as humanitarian pauses or tied to hostage exchange agreements, were announced but consistently broke down amid mutual accusations of breaches, and the lack of binding enforcement (Garcés & Porfirione, 2024, p. 2). By early 2024, hostilities persisted under an intensified siege that further restricted food, fuel, potable water, and medical supplies, while aid agencies faced entry denials and severe security risks. This prolonged phase of violence entrenched Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe and reinforced its historical trajectory as a territory where military offensives are intertwined with imperial ambition, settler-colonial restructuring, demographic engineering, and the systematic erosion of Palestinian sovereignty.

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## Local and Regional Political Impact

The 2023 war on the Gaza Strip must be understood not solely as a military reprisal but as a deeply embedded political project with far-reaching regional and international implications. Scholars and analysts across recent literature emphasize that the war's rationale and trajectory align with long-standing Israeli strategic doctrines aimed at reshaping the demographic and geopolitical contours of Gaza. The political practices that Israel is implementing in Gaza are considered to be under the categorization of necropolitics, which can be defined as the sovereign power to dictate who may live and who must die, and it's more related to modern political orders, particularly those that operate through borders, warfare, prisons, and abandonment. Unlike biopolitics, which manages life, necropolitics organizes social worlds around exposure to death, precarity, and disposability. This is observable in Gaza clearly in the prolonged siege, infrastructural collapse, and mass forced displacement which is creating conditions in which survival itself becomes contingent and temporary. (Mbembe, 2020, p. 173)

The war in Gaza has operated -deliberately- as a geopolitical lever, enabling Israel to reposition itself within a rapidly shifting global order, particularly by leveraging U.S. backing and normalizing ties with Arab regimes (Ali, 2025, p. 59). This leverage is exercised through high-profile bilateral meetings, coordinated security agreements, and regional economic initiatives that recast Israel as a central partner in Middle Eastern stability and trade.

By the Israeli narratives, the October 7<sup>th</sup> event was saw as a constitutive rupture, framed as an unprecedented civilizational shock that reorganized Israeli political, moral, and emotional landscapes. The civilian casualties, and the Israeli institutional failure serve as the foundational moral justification for the following military actions, which were rendered reactive, defensive, and tragic, and the Palestinian suffering is a derivative consequence of Hamas' actions, which, long ago, fell under the Iranian influence. Gaza was always saw in the Israeli eyes as a permanent security problem, and all prior historical experiences, such as displacement, siege, and military campaigns, are acknowledged only insofar as they intersect with Israeli security concerns, effectively depoliticizing Palestinian claims to land, sovereignty, and return. (Bar-Tal, 2025, p. 9)

This approach that the Israeli officials have followed lies within a broader and historically rooted imperialist framework. The 2023 war on Gaza is not only a national security operation but it is seen as a manifestation of global imperial dynamics that seek to reassert western influence over regions perceived as destabilized or resistant to global capitalist order (Montserrat & Carucí, 2025, p. 73). In this regard, Gaza becomes a testbed for advanced forms of state violence, where military technologies, surveillance regimes, and counterinsurgency tactics are tested, refined, and eventually exported. The Strip, subjected to total siege and indiscriminate bombardment, served as an experimental site for the application of necropolitics and demographic control in densely populated urban areas, which in its turn exemplifies the globalization of settler-colonial techniques, wherein strategies of domination are perfectly demonstrated.

The war has also produced profound regional and international political impact waves, extending well beyond the boundaries of Gaza to reshape political dynamics in the whole middle east. In Lebanon, for example, the escalation intensified the missiles exchanges between Hezbollah and Israeli forces along the southern border, raising the risk of a broader regional war. By mid-2024, a sustained Israeli air and ground campaign in southern Lebanon, combined with targeted assassinations of Hezbollah's senior leadership and the destruction of its command-and-control infrastructure, significantly degraded the group's operational capacity.

This in its turn, included the elimination of key figures responsible for the disruption of supply lines from Syria (El-Shewy, Griffiths, & Jones, 2025, p. 81). This weakening of Hezbollah, a critical ally and military partner to Damascus, combined with Iran's diminished regional capacity severely undermined the Assad regime in Syria, and eroded the regime's ability to hold contested territories. Simultaneously, Iran's reduced ability to project power and has limited the financial and logistical aid, creating supply shortages and weakening the Syrian armed forces. As a result, it paved the way for the opposition forces to reclaim major cities in the country and inaugurate a new political era (Ali, 2025, p. 60).

Iran, a long-time supporter of both Hamas and Hezbollah, experienced heightened geopolitical tension as Israeli and U.S. officials framed Tehran as a central instigator. In early 2025, it escalated into direct exchanges of bombing between Israel and Iran on two waves, which eventually, led to an extensive confrontation, targeted naval and energy infrastructure in Iran, and finally the United States intervened militarily with precision strikes on key Iranian facilities and targeted the alleged Iranian nuclear program. The U.S. intervention significantly degraded Iran's military capabilities, disrupted its regional supply networks, and weakened its regime's influence across the Middle East, amplifying its isolation and curtailing its ability to support allied non-state actors (Montserrat & Caruci, 2025, p. 74).

Despite the regional and international legal movement against the war and the condemnation of the war crimes that the Israeli Defence Forces are accused of, we continued to see that the military response was still conducted within the international law framework, particularly following a principle when a state actor confronts a non-state armed group embedded within a densely populated civilian environment, and preformed within the frame of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. This narrative underscores that Hamas' operational strategy, particularly its use of civilian infrastructure and non-uniformed combatants, creates legal and moral dilemmas that strain conventional interpretations of the UN principles. Civilian harm, displacement, and infrastructure destruction are thus situated within a discourse of tragic inevitability rather than deliberate policy. Gaza is officially considered a legally exceptional battlefield, where classical distinctions between combatants and civilians are blurred by urban density, tunnel warfare, and hybrid military tactics. (REVKIN, 2024, p. 3)

It is notable that Israeli officials continued to draw the outlines of the Strip's future policy in addition to its present in their announced papers and research. An INSS policy paper has shared the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's publicly released principles "*The day after*", emphasizing indefinite Israeli freedom of military operation, demilitarization of Gaza, and the exclusion of both Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. The paper contends that such a vision would inevitably force Israel into a de-facto, long-term responsibility over Gaza without international legitimacy or financial backing. However, many Israeli scholars have reflected on this approach and expressed that excluding the Palestinian authorities entirely is an illusion, as no Arab or international actors are willing to finance reconstruction or civilian governance without a recognized Palestinian governing body (Dekel, 2024 , p. 6).

## **Economic Impact**

The public analysis and reports that describe the economic situation in Gaza show deep impacts locally and, the region, or even on the international stage. As discussed in above sections, the war came at a sudden and it was considered by some parties as a justification to achieve goals beyond the security reasons and anti-terrorism action, so when studying it from its domestic perspective, the Israeli economy has shown some resilience but surely, it's facing its most significant fiscal challenge in decades. The Bank of Israel estimates the total war cost

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(2023–2025) at approximately \$68 billion, this includes direct military spending, civilian evacuation costs, and lost tax revenue. Also, Israel's defense budget as a percentage of GDP nearly doubled, reaching roughly 8.8%. This has led to a deficit of around 6.9%, necessitating significant tax hikes and cuts to social services. The mobilization of reservists and the exclusion of Palestinian laborers caused a severe labor market shock, particularly in construction and agriculture. While the high-tech sector remains the primary engine of growth, risk premiums have made foreign investors more cautious. It is also worth mentioning that the Gaza war has provided a substantial boost to Israel's military-industrial complex and high-tech security economy, solidifying its position among the world's leading arms exporters. (Algarhi & Lagos, 2024, p. 1). However, global demand for Israeli defence technologies, unmanned aerial systems, and cybersecurity platforms surged during this period, leading to record annual export contracts worth an estimated US\$13–15 billion by late 2024. According to IMF data, the fiscal deficit widened from just over 2% to between 6% and 8% of GDP for 2023–25, with direct war expenditures projected to reach US\$67 billion by 2025 despite significant U.S. military assistance (Butter, 2024, p. 273).

On the other hand, the sectoral impact was deeply uneven; construction activity dropped nearly 33% due to labour shortages, exacerbated by the loss of Palestinian workers from the West Bank, while agriculture contracted by roughly 25% as security zones rendered border farmland unusable. Tourism receipts fell by over 50% in late 2023 compared to the previous year, intensifying losses sustained during the pandemic years. This paradox, of simultaneous economic contraction in civilian sectors and accelerated growth in the security economy, illustrates the war's dual role as both a domestic economic strain and a driver of strategic industrial gain.

Looking at the other side, Gaza has experienced what the UN describes as a complete economic collapse, with recovery expected to take decades. GDP Contraction: Gaza's GDP collapsed by over 80% during the height of the conflict. By late 2025, economic activity remains at a near-standstill. Recent assessments by the World Bank and UN estimate that rebuilding Gaza will cost between \$53-\$70 billion. Over 70% of all housing and infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, and the UN report stated "*69 years of human development*" have been wiped out. Unemployment remains near 70-80%, and almost the entire population lives below the poverty line, dependent on international aid (UNCTD, 2025, p. 10).

The war triggered a ripple effect that weakened the economies of Israel's neighbors. Jordan and Lebanon saw massive declines in tourism due to regional instability and the brief escalation of conflict on the northern border in mid-2025, Jordan faced port disruptions and tourism losses, but secured IMF loans. Egypt was hit hardest by the Red Sea crisis. Houthi attacks on shipping led to a 40-50% drop in Suez Canal revenues, a critical source of foreign currency for Cairo, costing about US\$350 million per month (Butter, 2024, p. 273).

Globally, the conflict served as a reminder of the fragility of modern supply chains. To avoid the Red Sea, global shipping was forced to reroute around the Cape of Good Hope. This added 10–14 days to journeys, tripled freight rates at their peak, and increased global carbon emissions. The IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor), intended to be a major competitor to China's Belt and Road, faced significant delays as regional diplomatic normalization slowed, and while oil prices eventually stabilized, natural gas prices in Europe and the Mediterranean remained volatile, staying roughly 25% higher than pre-conflict levels due to the periodic shutdown of Israeli offshore gas rigs.

As we can see, it's quite noticeable that despite the high bill Israel and many other countries had to pay in the aftermath of Gaza's war, Israel had made significant beneficial

contribution to the consolidation and international expansion of its military-industrial complex and high-tech security merchandises. Long-term gains in military exports and global interest were being achieved by Israel's defence technologies even during the peak of war time, while many casualties were falling on daily basis (Schein, 2024, p. 927). The war thus became the arena of experimentation and a marketing platform for technologies in real-time conflict conditions. Autonomous drones, AI-driven surveillance tools, and population tracking systems, are subsequently sold to regimes around the world seeking to fortify borders or suppress dissent, embedding Israel's war economy into the fabric of global militarization, and for many strategy drawing parties in the Israeli government, this military sector gains might be so much appealing, that they will try to push for continuing the war, advertising their new weaponry and showing the latest technology in the sector on the battlefield ground directly, in order to sell as much as they could and even-up the economic loses they are facing on the other aspect of the country's economic sector. While retreating from Gaza at a critical stage of the war, despite the international voices calling for a treaty or a ceasefire, might look like a defeat for the Israeli army, damaging their military sells and the scale will tip in favor for the economic losses resulting from the war, which is not an option for Israel.

In parallel, other narratives arose explaining that the long-term ongoing war, despite the repetitive ceasefire attempts, offers a perfect zone to act as a scapegoat to be destroyed and enable future capital investment and geopolitical restructuring. This was described as imperial-economic laboratories by (Montserrat & Carucí, 2025, p. 74), as he argues that destruction is not merely a consequence of conflict but a strategic precondition for reconstruction aligned with foreign investment priorities, accompanied with economical spike for the country, lifting the domestic economy once again, to even higher levels of where it was before the war. This was made obvious in circulated (SEZs) suggestion, "*special economic zones*" that was proposed by the U.S. for Gaza's post-war redevelopment and included the promotion of tourism-oriented real estate ventures, and integrating Gaza into global supply chains as a low-cost labour reservoir. (Soliman, 2025, p. 4)

### **Humanitarian Impact**

The Gaza war represented one of the gravest and most far-reaching crises in recent history, both in scale and in structural intent. The war has decimated essential pillars of civilian life, collapsing already overstretched health, education, water, electricity, and sanitation systems, and plunging over two million Palestinians into an unrelenting state of humanitarian catastrophe. Civilian casualties have exceeded 50,000 deaths, with tens of thousands more injured, the vast majority being non-combatants, including thousands of women and children. According to the reports, the assault on Gaza's healthcare system has been particularly devastating: at least 26 hospitals and more than 50 primary health facilities were rendered non-operational due to repeated bombardment; over 120 ambulances were damaged or destroyed; and more than 300 healthcare workers were killed while performing their duties (Rana, 2024, p. 15). Humanitarian agencies estimate that more than 1.7 million people were displaced into overcrowded shelters, while 2.2 million, virtually the entire population, are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, including food, water, and medical care. At the height of the conflict, daily caloric intake for large segments of the population fell to emergency famine thresholds, and more than 70% of water and sanitation infrastructure was either damaged or non-functional. Supply chains for medicine and equipment were systematically blocked, leaving medical staff to operate under siege-like conditions without anaesthesia, fuel, or clean water. The targeting of health infrastructure, in this context, cannot be seen as incidental; rather, it reflects what several scholars have called a war on life, where the very means of civilian survival are

weaponized.

A clear strategy was followed by Israel to eliminate the chances of any development in Gaza which is visible in the calculated restriction of humanitarian access. Human Rights Watch provides documentation of Israeli forces obstructing the entry of fuel, food, medical supplies, and humanitarian aid, while simultaneously conducting military operations in zones previously designated as safe corridors (HRW, 2024, p. 6). Such tactics also considered as a tool to use of starvation as a method of warfare, thereby advancing broader goals of displacement and control under the guise of military necessity.

The measured psychological and emotional toll on Gaza's population was equally devastating and increasingly recognized as a crisis on its own. Widespread and deepening mental health disorders, with exceptionally high rates of PTSD, anxiety, depression, and chronic trauma, particularly affecting vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities were recorded (Aldabbour, et al., 2025, p. 5). These mental health afflictions are not episodic but structural, emerging from the prolonged exposure to aerial bombardment, forced displacement, family separation, and the relentless loss of life. Compounding these psychological traumas is the absence of safe spaces and the collapse of Gaza's social fabric, including the destruction of schools, community centres, and social welfare institutions that previously provided psychosocial support to a certain extend for to the individuals. The sheer magnitude of internal displacement has led to hyper-congested living conditions in shelters and UNRWA facilities, where basic necessities such as food, clean water, sanitation, and protection are critically lacking. These overcrowded environments exacerbate tensions and expose civilians -especially women and children- to heightened risks of gender-based violence, disease, and psychological distress.

The Israeli society has equally suffered from psychological distresses following the October 7<sup>th</sup>, and it varied according to the degree of exposure, gender, and event centrality. The trauma unfolded over time as individuals cognitively and emotionally integrate violent events into their personal and collective identities. individuals perceived the event as a central trauma to their personal identity and life narrative, they've experienced higher levels of distress, regardless of objective exposure, suggesting that psychological harm is amplified when violence becomes a core reference point for understanding the self and the nation. Women exhibit higher levels of psychological distress than men in general, and Gaza was always considered the primary source of threat and trauma. (Schechtman, E. Hay, Schwartz, Neria, & Roe, 2025, p. 7)

Many Israeli officials worked on dehumanizing the Palestinians in Gaza and shared statement as human animals, however, according to an academic paper that studied the Israel official narrative, Gaza is not necessarily saw governed through explicit dehumanization, but through what terms as "*disregard*", in which, Palestinians are not portrayed as subhuman enemies through overtly racist or dehumanizing language, rather they are present as a demographic mass but absent as individual moral subjects. This shift from dehumanization to disregard marks a subtle but powerful transformation in how violence is legitimized in this war. Palestinians are not depicted as inherently inferior; instead, their suffering is treated as irrelevant to decision-making, except insofar as it affects Israel's international standing or operational constraints. In this regard, Gaza's population is acknowledged abstractly but excluded from ethical consideration, enabling large-scale destruction without the need for explicit demonization. This form of moral disengagement is particularly effective in liberal democratic contexts, where over dehumanization would clash with normative commitments to human rights and legality. The term *disregard* allows Israel to maintain a self-image of moral

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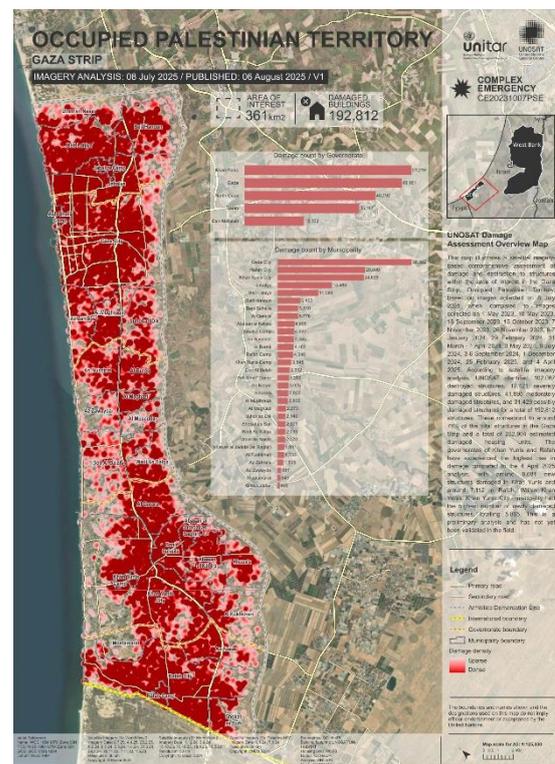
restraint while simultaneously conducting operations that produce massive civilian harm. (Levy, 2025, p. 4). This explains how disregard has reproduced Media reporting, military spokesperson narratives, and political speeches emphasize Israeli losses, threats, and strategic objectives, while Palestinian deaths and displacement are framed as secondary effects or unavoidable outcomes.

Moreover, the war has not only produced suffering but has entrenched a sophisticated form of “*humanitarian containment*”, a strategy followed that reduces humanitarian aid to become a tool for managing and enforcing political agendas rather than relieving. This was a calculated governance technique to intensify the control over the strip through humanitarian responses. Many international humanitarian responses to Gaza were entangled with depoliticized narratives that obscure the structures underpinning the crisis, thereby reinforcing the very systems of blockade, surveillance, and control they claim to object (Espejo, et al., 2025, p. 3). This was made obvious in many if the blockade incidents, especially when bombing was done to the refugees camps tents (2025), the standing queues for receiving humanitarian aids (Gritten, 2025), or several similar accidents that happened claiming to target terrorist individuals among the aid seekers and the casualties were escribed as collateral damages. In this sense, the humanitarian dimension of the war was not a consequence of a violent action, but it rather became an active tool to shape political reality in the stirp and rights under the siege.

## Urban Destruction

The war has engendered a scale of urban devastation that far exceeds previous military assaults on the strip, raising profound concerns not only regarding human security but also about the deliberate erasure of the spatial and material foundations of Palestinian life. The intensity, repetition, and precision with which the built environment has been targeted, encompassing entire neighbourhoods, infrastructure, and heritage sites, suggest that this destruction serves functions far beyond conventional military objectives.

The destruction in the Gaza Strip has reached catastrophic proportions, by early 2024, over 70,000 housing units were completely destroyed, with an additional 290,000 partially damaged, representing damage to nearly 60% of the territory’s total housing stock (HRW, 2024, p. 4). More than 500 public buildings, including schools, universities, and administrative centres, have been levelled to the ground, and 220 neighbourhoods have suffered extensive structural damage or complete erasure. Satellite assessments indicate that in some urban gatherings, such as Gaza City and Khan Younis, destruction levels surpass 70–80% of built-up areas. Critical infrastructure, including roads, water networks, electricity grids, and telecommunications, has been degraded by more than 65% (Holail, et al.,



2024, p. 9). These figures underscore the unprecedented scale of the devastation, which has transformed much of Gaza's urban landscape into a flattened expanse of rubble and debris, reflecting a level of infrastructural erasure that exceeds any previous recorded wartime damage on the strip, and aligns with patterns of systematic spatial dismantlement.

This level of urban destructions are raising many questions on the reaction paths the Israeli government had to take, and it has been argued above, these reactions had deeper intentions, particularly the systematic targeting of residential neighbourhoods, municipal infrastructure, and historic urban centres, represents a colonial mode of warfare aimed at severing Palestinians from their territorial roots and reshaping the urban geography into a governable vacuum (Ajour, 2024, p. 6), seeks to obliterate not just structures but also the memory, identity, and resilience embedded within them.

The destruction of urban infrastructure should be conceptualized not as accidental or excessive force but as a deliberate policy of infrastructural erasure, wherein the destruction of Gaza's built environment serves as a mechanism of settler-colonial domination (Harvey, 2025, p. 641). In this paradigm, Gaza's urban fabric is methodically dismantled to eliminate the spatial conditions necessary for social and cultural continuity, or even organized resistance.

One of the specialized corporation's post-conflict shelter analysis further amplifies this concern by highlighting that the scale and precision of the destruction surpass mere housing loss, it constitutes the obliteration of entire urban systems, necessitating the re-establishment of civilizational foundations in a context still shaped by siege, isolation, and trauma (Culbertson, et al., 2025), which naturally lead us to the conclusion that the consequences of this devastation have been so expansive that the only emerging proposals for Gaza's reconstruction are increasingly framed within neoliberal and depoliticized paradigms, making it optimized for economic integration and regional coordination, rather than as a space for the reconstitution of indigenous identity, self-governance, and historical continuity (Soliman, 2025, p. 4).

Some voices in Israel began urging changes to how monitoring is done, stressing that city layouts inside the strip needed rethinking. Heavy dependence on distant observation, data algorithms, and long-range intel, blurred real-time understanding during operations. Losing touch with local informants and daily rhythms in Gaza made it harder to grasp what certain actions really meant. Instead of chasing foresight, attention shifted toward staying constantly aware and responsive. Therefore, alert systems ought to rely less on foreseeing events, more on building resilience, which was one of the most important reasons behind the deliberate urban eraser and proclaimed needed change of the strip's built environment and urban fabric. (Baram & Ben Israel, 2025, p. 480)

This devastation could be framed as a part of a transnational approach of settler urbanism, wherein deliberate destruction becomes the first phase of a broader spatial reordering that prepares the ground for other future reconstruction plans aligned with geopolitical and economic interests (El-Shewy, Griffiths, & Jones, 2025, p. 80). In this framework, ruins do not signal collapse, instead, it reflects intentional emptiness crafted to open doors for aid-backed rebuilding projects. Urban planning then shifts into a managerial function, serving less about reconstruction or justice yet more about enforcing secure, neutralized environments shaped by capital flows. Indigenous architecture, inherited design ways, along with collective wisdom fade behind sharp designed serving an outside funding donors and investments. New patterns will start to take shape, less as the familiar local, and more as foreign investments required spaces, military necessities, and transnational priorities. The destruction of the urban environment of the cities within the Gaza Strip during the 2023 war was more than just an armed conflict outcome; it was as a deliberate redesign of the urban spaces, fuelled by loss,

forced movement, and long-term control aims. What rises afterward isn't renewal, it's a land modified to be, stripped of self-rule, and governance without sovereignty.

### Forced Displacement of The People of Gaza Strip

The war on Gaza led to one of the most extensive and coordinated episodes of deliberate forced displacement in Palestinian history. Even though the Israeli government, represented by its prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly stated at the beginning of the war that Israel has no intention to fully occupy and take control over the strip, rather its sole purpose from the war was advertised to be neutralizing Hamas, and clear it up completely from the strip, which represented Israel's idea of security control over the strip as they have suggested as a solution in the indefinite future (Beaumont, 2023). Later on during the war, entire communities, urban and rural, refugee and non-refugee alike, were systematically uprooted as Israeli military campaigns targeted every region of the Strip, from the densely populated north to the overstretched south. The Israeli army kept sharing evacuation orders with the Gazans, according to the bombardment plan, using the argument of targeting terrorist cells and neutralizing Hamas leadership hidden within the residential and civil infrastructure, this led to quickly formed huge waves of displacement fleeing the war and to other, thought to be safer areas. According to Human Rights Watch, over 85% of Gaza's population, more than 1.9 million people, was forcibly displaced within weeks, with thousands displaced multiple times due to repeated shifts in evacuation orders (HRW, 2024, p. 4). These orders were often issued with little notice, no safe transportation, and conflicting guidance, pushing civilians into zones, despite the formed human gathering in them, later declared unsafe or directly bombed, such as Rafah, which was declared a humanitarian zone initially and was designated as a refugee area, but later it was itself subjected to airstrikes and incursions. Forced displacement on such a large scale, repeating under threat and duress, unfolds where safe resettlement is absent, stripped of minimal protections, breaches fundamental principles of humanitarian law while mirroring terms like a regime of movement without shelter, one shaped by compulsion yet closed to sanctuary (Espejo, et al., 2025, p. 3).

An Israeli Ministry of Intelligence policy document was leaked to public in 2023, explicitly recommends the forcible and permanent transfer of Gaza's entire Palestinian population to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. The document dated October 13, 2023, few days after the initial event, outlining population transfer as the preferred strategic outcome of the war, presenting it as both a deterrence mechanism and a mean to resolve Gaza's long-term governance problem. There was a detailed, multi-stage plan involving mass evacuation, military occupation, the prevention of return, and the establishment of refugee settlements in Sinai, coupled with an extensive international public-relations campaign designed to frame expulsion as a humanitarian necessity. But what is particularly striking is that the document recommends conducting psychological and ideological messaging targeting Palestinians themselves, aimed at extinguishing hope of return and reframing displacement as divinely

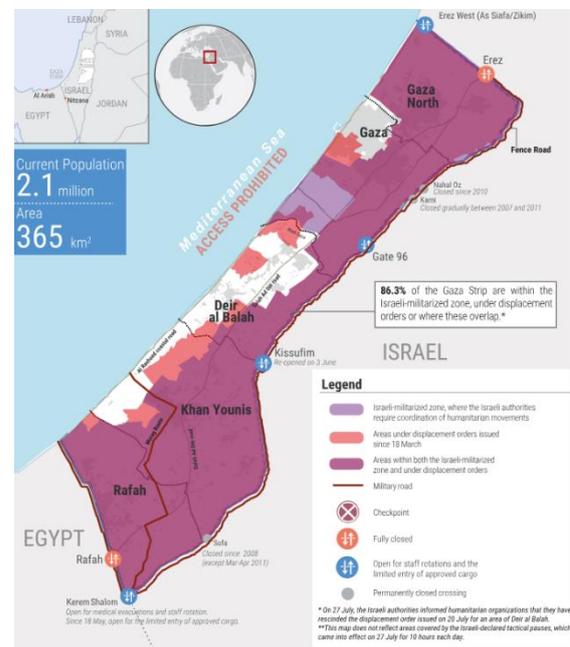


Figure 2 - Gaza Impact Report, UNOCHA, 2025

ordained or inevitable. (Abraham, 2023, p. 4). This clearly falls under the examination of settler-colonial strategies, and necropolitical governance, which became arguably, the main derivative for the war, only few days after it's start.

Such vulgar displacement plans faced wide resistance on the regional and international stages, and did not get to be actualized eventually, however, as discussed earlier, the displacement continued to be forced upon the people of Gaza within the strip, acting as the required tool to be used whenever it was convenient, while keeping the calls rising, until this moment, for possible abroad displacement for Palestinians out of the strip. The conditions of current displacement have further exacerbated the humanitarian emergency, forcing people into overcrowded shelters, improvised encampments, and makeshift roadside settlements, often under tarpaulin sheets or in the rubble of destroyed buildings, with minimal access to clean water, sanitation, electricity, or food, which led to surging rates of communicable diseases, malnutrition, and injuries, particularly among children and the elderly. This repeated mass displacement has also severed community ties, paralyzed educational systems, leaving hundreds of thousands of children without access to schooling, and eradicated both formal and informal economic lifelines such as street markets, family-run businesses, and local employment structures. (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Carpi, 2025, p. 1).

This forced displacement is beginning to be considered a central strategic objective, deeply embedded in emerging regional visions and geopolitical planning of the state of Israel. As it was, along with the support of various international donor, framing the policy think tanks, increasingly shaping the future of Gaza as one involving a significantly reduced or permanently relocated Palestinian population, particularly from areas deemed strategically or economically vital (Garcés & Porfirione, 2024, p. 10). It was noted that, within the suggested solutions or reconstruction proposals of the strip, the plan always underscores that consideration must be for post-conflict shelters, infrastructures, and urban redevelopment assuming that a long-term reduction in population density is actualizing, and paving the way toward easier and more accessible, liberal reconstruction plans, whether the population reduction happened via displacement, or any other mean! (Culbertson, et al., 2025, p. 14). In this context, displacement becomes institutionalized not as a temporary emergency response, but as a calculated instrument of political and territorial restructuring. It facilitates the production of a Gaza stripped of resistance, autonomy, and demographic complexity, engineered to fit into neoliberal redevelopment schemes and securitized governance models. This process actively undermines Palestinian rights to return, to self-determination, and to territorial continuity, thereby embedding the erasure of Palestinian presence within the spatial design of post-war reconstruction itself.

This foundation emphasizes on the Neoliberal Urbanization approach, which is followed in the Gaza case, as it is a geographically uneven, crisis-driven process rather than a coherent ideology. The neoliberal urbanism can be identified as it's a policy that restructures cities through privatization, entrepreneurial governance, competitive inter-urban positioning, and the rollback of social redistribution. Crucially, cities become sites where market discipline is enforced through spatial strategies, including gentrification, redevelopment, and displacement. As neoliberalism thrives through creative destruction, dismantling prior social and institutional arrangements to open space for new accumulation regimes, the urban crises-economic collapse, security threats, or post-conflict destruction in Gaza are not saw as anomalies but opportunities for neoliberal restructuring, and market-led urban futures, but unfortunately, one that exclude Palestinians (Theodore, Peck, & Brenner, 2021).

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## Gaza's Reconstruction Plan

The reconstruction discourse surrounding post-war Gaza is not simply a technical or humanitarian endeavour, but rather it's shaping to be a deeply ideological and geopolitical project embedded in long-standing settler-colonial, neoliberal, and megaproject urbanism agendas. While international actors, including development agencies and multilateral donors, have put forward a variety of rebuilding initiatives, these are arguably shaped by political and economic interests rather than the aspirations of the Palestinian population. These plans are largely embedded within a framework that privileges the military securitization, spatial apartheid the Israeli government is seeking to pose over the strip. It was noticeable that planning processes are premised on assumptions of reduced population density, restricted sovereignty, and tightly regulated mobility, with a focus on standardized, modular, and externally managed shelter systems rather than inclusive, participatory rebuilding models (Culbertson, et al., 2025, p. 14). These frameworks envision Gaza not as a resilient and self-determined urban space, but as a strategically curated enclave compatible with regional trade corridors, border regimes, and donor-led governance priorities.

Multiple proposals have been circulated as common reconstruction plan for the Gaza strip, relying mainly on megaprojects led approach often described as "*Megaproject Urbanism*", which is considered to be instruments of political economy rather than neutral development tools, as large-scale urban projects will function as mechanisms for capital accumulation, territorial control, and socio-spatial restructuring. Megaprojects are framed as state-corporate alliances that prioritize global competitiveness, spectacle, and investor confidence over social equity., and such projects frequently rely on displacement, land clearance, and regulatory exceptionalism, producing what is known as Zones of Suspension where normal planning rules and social protections are overridden. Importantly, megaprojects are shown to operate most aggressively in contexts of crisis, post-war, post-disaster, or post-displacement, where populations are politically weakened and resistance capacity is diminished. (Rek-Woźniak, 2023, p. 10)

According to proposals articulated under the current U.S. President Trump's renewed Peace to Prosperity framework, branded in its latest iteration as the "*Gaza Riviera*" plan, and echoed by various Israeli officials, the reconstruction blueprint is far more than a post-war rebuilding scheme. It calls for the relocation of approximately 1 million Palestinians from Gaza's most densely populated northern and central districts to designated redevelopment areas in the south or, if possible, outside the Strip entirely. Central to the proposal is the transformation of Gaza's 40-kilometer Mediterranean coastline into a luxury tourism and investment corridor. This includes the construction of at least three major tourism hubs modelled on Gulf resort cities, each featuring high-rise hotels, entertainment districts, and private beaches; multiple high-value commercial zones integrated into special economic zones (SEZs); and large-scale residential complexes with tens of thousands of standardized, securitized housing units. Infrastructure plans detail two modernized seaports, one a high-capacity cargo hub designed to

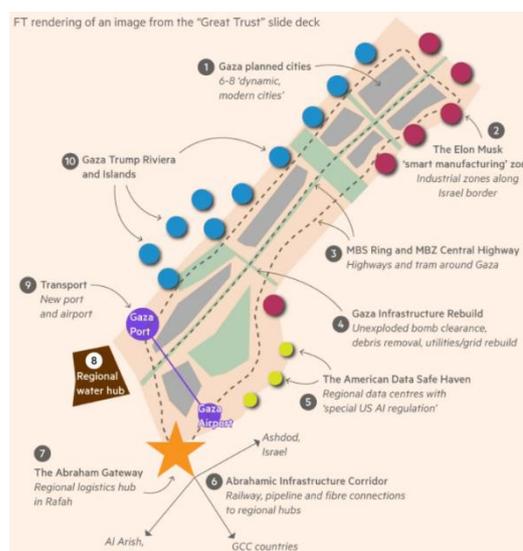


Figure 3 – "10 Mega Project for Gaza", "Tony Blair's staff took part in 'Gaza Riviera' project with BCG", Financial Times, 2025

Infrastructure plans detail two modernized seaports, one a high-capacity cargo hub designed to

handle millions of tons annually, the other a luxury marina for high-end tourism, complemented by new industrial parks, logistics terminals, and upgraded border facilities to service both trade and tourism flows. The plan sets an ambitious 10–15 years implementation period, with phased construction linked to strict Israeli-defined security benchmarks and conditional on multi-billion-dollar international investment commitments from Gulf states, Western donors, and private capital. In essence, the Gaza Riviera vision positions reconstruction as both an economic transformation and a geopolitical reconfiguration of Gaza's spatial and demographic reality (Garcés & Porfirione, 2024, p. 10; Ajjour, 2024, p. 10; Soliman, 2025, p. 4).

A report explaining the project in more details was shared publicly in 2025 under the title of "*The GREAT Trust*", which stands for Gaza Reconstitution, Economic Acceleration and Transformation Trust, a large-scale post-war reconstruction and governance framework for Gaza led primarily by the United States, with Israel retaining overarching security authority. Gaza was here framed as a former Iranian proxy whose destruction creates an opportunity for transformation into a compliant economic node within a pro-American, Abraham Accords-based regional architecture. The proposal also assumes Hamas' complete dismantling and treats Gaza's pre-war economy as effectively worth zero, justifying comprehensive spatial, economic, and political reengineering. \$70–100 billion public investment leveraged to attract significant private capital through public–private partnerships (PPPs), land trusts, and real-estate tokenization. The Trust would control 30–40% of Gazan land, leasing it for redevelopment while offering Gazans digital tokens exchangeable for housing. The plan openly promotes voluntary relocation of up to 25% of Gaza's population as a cost-saving mechanism, with explicit financial incentives to encourage permanent non-return. Urban restructuring centres on 10 megaprojects, including smart cities, luxury tourism zones, ports, rail corridors, data centres, and industrial zones integrated into the IMEC trade corridor. Governance will be conceived as a custodianship or trusteeship model, beginning with humanitarian administration (via a Gaza Humanitarian Foundation), followed by a multi-year transition in which the GREAT Trust exercises executive authority until a deradicalized Palestinian polity emerges and joins the Abraham Accords. Security provision relies heavily on Western private military contractors, transitional forces, and locally trained police under Israeli oversight. (The GREAT Trust, 2025)

Another narrative was merging up to the surface of discussion, and it is the proposal for the Ben Gurion Canal construction, a mega-infrastructure project intended to connect the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, positioning Israel as an alternative maritime corridor to the Suez Canal. A controversial and geopolitically charged project that as it would pass through southern Israel and, according to emerging speculations and strategic mappings, potentially cut across parts of the Gaza Strip or near it to the south, which will be heavily attached to the security situation and governance types controlling the strip. Though not officially disclosed in diplomatic circles, many analysis indicate that the canal project, framed as a multi-purpose infrastructure corridor, would serve at least three interlocking functions: facilitating global maritime trade, establishing a militarized buffer between Egypt



Figure 5 - Ben Guion Canal Project - "From Ethnic Cleansing to Energy Goals", Modern Diplomacy, 2023

and the Gaza Strip, and transforming Gaza into a securitized logistical frontier (El-Shewy, Griffiths, & Jones, 2025, p. 80; Harvey, 2025, p. 641). The project's realization would require extensive depopulation and territorial clearance, particularly in the southern and coastal zones of Gaza, which are among the most densely inhabited areas and historically significant for refugee resettlement. However, Israeli voices have risen from the inside arguing the project's beneficial claims, as it will be framed against contemporary geopolitical disruptions, including the Gaza war, Red Sea insecurity, Houthi attacks on shipping, and global supply-chain vulnerabilities, and that it renew the interest in the canal reflects broader processes of economic decoupling, strategic redundancy, and infrastructure geopolitics. (Pezzulli, 2025, p. 4)

Overall, these proposals exemplify a neoliberal–security urbanism paradigm, where reconstruction, displacement, securitization, and profit-making are tightly interwoven, and where Gaza's population is managed as a variable within a geopolitical and financial optimization model rather than as a sovereign political community. (Soliman, 2025, p. 4). These development paradigms reframe the war's aftermath as beneficial mean upon which to inscribe securitized, investment-driven urban schemes, thus detaching reconstruction efforts from the lived experiences, cultural traditions, and historical claims of the Palestinian people and reflecting a colonial spatial logic that seeks not to overwrite Gaza's fabric with depoliticized and governable space optimized for surveillance and foreign capital (Ajour, 2024, p. 10).

Moreover, it is observed that the circulating reconstruction frameworks are increasingly structured around a model that excludes Palestinian participation from meaningful decision-making processes, transferring authority to international financial institutions, regional state actors, and private corporations aligned with donor agendas (Garcés & Porfirione, 2024, p. 10). This externalized and technocratic model reproduces and entrenches colonial hierarchies, positioning Palestinians not as decision makers of their future but as objects of management and containment. In doing so, reconstruction becomes a vehicle for reinforcing existing power imbalances rather than addressing the root causes of destruction and displacement. It operationalizes spatial control under the guise of humanitarianism and recovery, converting Gaza into a liminal space of geopolitical utility, buffered, surveilled, and subordinated to regional security architectures and capitalist extraction. The ideologies embedded in these reconstruction plans systematically erode Palestinian sovereignty, fragment historical continuity, and normalize displacement as a permanent condition. As such, reconstruction in Gaza risks becoming the final, institutionalized chapter of dispossession, where the illusion of rebuilding masks the reality of engineered erasure.

### **Conclusion**

The 2023 war on Gaza has not only unfolded as a brutal campaign of military destruction and mass displacement, but as a prelude to an expansive spatial and ideological reengineering project designed to fundamentally alter the urban and demographic character of the territory. Justified through the strategic discourses of security, counterterrorism, and humanitarian reconstruction, the war created a justification both materially and politically enabling the advancement of mega-urban schemes rooted in settler-colonial, neoliberal, and militarized paradigms. Mega-urbanisation projects positioned Gaza as a pivotal logistical artery in transregional trade, and high-end coastal redevelopment that imagines Gaza's as a space of survival, but as a leisure enclave for future investors; and speculative proposals referring to Gaza as the New Dubai! (Harvey, 2025, p. 641; Ajour, 2024, p. 10; Soliman, 2025, p. 4). These visions effectively erase Palestinian claims to land and memory by imposing externally governed futures that prioritize capital flows, surveillance infrastructure, and demographic erasure.

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It is noticed that such proposals do not emerge in a political vacuum, but rather the ideological framework of Gaza's reconstruction is already deeply entangled in transnational circuits of capital accumulation, militarized spatial governance, and authoritarian regional partnerships that collectively marginalize Palestinian agency, which situates Gaza not as a site for geopolitical frontier optimized for security regimes and profit extraction (El-Shewy, Griffiths, & Jones, 2025, p. 80; Garcés & Porfirione, 2024, p. 10). In this context, the war is not merely a catastrophic episode of destruction but functions as a deliberate act of spatial and demographic engineering, an intervention that violently disrupts Palestinian historical continuity, reconfigures the urban landscape, and paves the way for externally dictated futures rooted in dispossession, surveillance, and containment.

Few Israeli voices argued that full Israeli military occupation of Gaza, while tactically effective, would be strategically damaging due to high economic costs, international isolation, and long-term instability. Instead, it is proposed to have a managed post-war framework in which Hamas is removed from governance but allowed to survive as a weakened organization, enabling hostage release while Israel retains ongoing security control through periodic military operations. The recommended strategy is centred on a technocratic interim administration in Gaza under international and Arab supervision, strict demilitarization, Israeli freedom of military action, and conditional reintegration of a reformed Palestinian Authority. Reconstruction is explicitly linked to security compliance and regional normalization, particularly the expansion of the Abraham Accords, framing Gaza's future as a security-managed, non-sovereign space rather than a pathway to Palestinian self-determination. (Hayman, 2025)

While in a survey with Gazans published in 2025, it was revealed that they do not view their land simply as a piece of territory to be negotiated, exchanged, or abandoned in the face of war, but rather as the very essence of their existence as a people. This profound connection explains why the idea of displacement is consistently rejected, even when the material realities of war, mass destruction of homes, famine, insecurity, and leadership fragmentation, might appear to make relocation the rational option. Instead, displacement is understood as a process of annihilation: to be forced off the land is to erase the collective memory and continuity of the Palestinian nation itself. The survey emphasizes that many Gazans are prepared to endure immense personal suffering, including hunger, homelessness, and the loss of family members, rather than consent to removal from Gaza. Such sacrifice is justified through the sacralization of values such as sovereignty, sharia, and especially the right of return, all of which are interpreted as inseparable from the land. The survey also found that 82% of respondents judged national sovereignty, and by extension, holding onto their land, as more important than even family safety and security (Atran, Rodriguez-Gómez, Yilmaz, & Gómez, 2025, p. 9). For Gazans, abandoning their territory does not simply mean resettlement elsewhere, but rather the loss of honour, history, and ontological security, the recognition of who they are in the world. This explains why external proposals that suggest Gaza could be emptied and repurposed, whether for strategic, political, or economic projects, provoke such deep resistance: they are not seen as peace initiatives but as attempts at erasure. Even symbolic gestures, such as an Israeli acknowledgment of the Nakba or limited recognition of the right of return, are valued precisely because they affirm the centrality of land to Palestinian identity. Without such recognition, plans of displacement are destined to harden resistance further, as Gazans perceive them as a continuation of a historical trajectory of dispossession. The study demonstrates that the future envisioned by Gaza's population is not one of exile, but of persistence and rootedness, even under devastating conditions, because to remain is to continue existing as Palestinians, while to leave is to vanish as a people. (Atran, Rodriguez-Gómez, Yilmaz, & Gómez, 2025, p.

11)

When urban regeneration is separated from political accountability, the right of return, and self-determination, it becomes synonymous with structural erasure. In such contexts, reconstruction operates not as a vehicle for justice or recovery, but as a technocratic instrument that consolidates demographic displacement, suppresses national aspirations, and reframes war itself as an opportunity for speculative spatial planning. Against this backdrop, the devastation of Gaza demands urgent international recognition and decisive intervention. All forms of forced displacement must be brought to an immediate end through binding global commitments to humanitarian and legal norms. Any genuine reconstruction process in the Gaza Strip must be grounded in the lived realities, cultural heritage, and historical continuity of its inhabitants, prioritizing locally rooted urban regeneration and essential services that strengthen Palestinian economic resilience, rather than externally driven, investor-led redevelopment schemes. Any credible reconstruction plan for the strip must be designed explicitly for the people of Gaza, grounded in their lived realities and informed by their aspirations, safeguarding their internationally recognized right to return, pursuing restorative justice, and enabling genuinely self-determined urban renewal. Such a plan should aim to restore the physical infrastructure, social cohesion, economic sustainability, and cultural continuity, rejecting models that will prioritize touristic spectacles, liberal and capital investments, or externally imposed geopolitical visions far from the local needs. Historical lessons from other post-war and post-crisis contexts offer vital guidance: the participatory, justice-oriented reconstruction in post-genocide Rwanda, which integrated grassroots decision-making and reconciliation processes; community-led rebuilding in post-tsunami Aceh, which prioritized livelihoods and disaster resilience; and heritage-sensitive, identity-preserving redevelopment in post-war Beirut, which sought to balance modernization with cultural preservation. These cases demonstrate that recovery, when anchored in local agency, inclusivity, and equity, can serve as a process of cultural reaffirmation, political empowerment, and collective healing, fostering environments where reconstruction becomes a catalyst for dignity, stability, and long-term self-reliance.

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