

# Building a Decent Gaza

by Daniel Pipes

**A significant portion of Palestinian people do not share the views of Hamas.  
--U.S. President Joe Biden**

## Netanyahu's Plan

On Feb. 22, 2024, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented his Security Cabinet with a short document, "The Day After Hamas." His office calls it "principles reflecting a broad public consensus on the goals of the war, and the civil alternative to the terrorist organization's rule in the Gaza Strip." Its key passage states that the Government of Israel plans to work primarily with Gazans to rebuild their territory, secondly with friendly Arab states.



*Damage following an Israeli airstrike on the El-Remal area in Gaza City on October 9, 2023.*

Civil affairs and responsibility for public order will be based on local actors with "management experience" and not identified with countries or organizations supporting terrorism or receive payments from them; a de-radicalization program will be promoted in all religious, educational, and welfare institutions in the [Gaza] strip with as much as possible the involvement and assistance of Arab countries that have experience in promoting de-radicalization.

In a step toward this program of self-rule, the IDF in late February began an informal pilot program of what it called "humanitarian pockets." Established in parts of north Gaza cleared of Hamas, they consist of local governing bodies of community leaders, including merchants and civil society leaders, whose duties include distributing humanitarian aid and revising school curricula. The process moves

slowly. “We’re looking for the right people to step up to the plate,” an official said. “But it is clear that this will take time, as no one will come forward if they think Hamas will put a bullet in their head.”

It bears noting that the Feb. 22 document does not mention the Palestinian Authority (PA), neither including nor excluding it. More generally, it avoids contentious issues. The *New York Times* characterized it as “carefully written to postpone long-term decisions about the territory’s fate and to avoid irreversible confrontations with both domestic allies and foreign partners.”

A confidential source informs me the plan relies heavily on a report, “Building Pillars of Peace: An Option for Gaza,” an independent analysis submitted to the government in August 2014. That report contains a mechanism for Gazans to run their own affairs through the creation of a Transitional International Presence based on the Oslo Accords. It recommends twelve Sector Working Groups to cover agriculture, education, employment creation, environment, health, infrastructure and housing, institution-building, police, private sector, public finance, tourism, and transport and telecommunications.<sup>1</sup>

## Criticisms

The idea of Israel working with Gazans faces two main criticisms. One prefers to fit Gaza into a larger political context. U.S. President Joe Biden calls for “a revitalized Palestinian

Authority” (abbreviated as RPA). Accordingly, U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby responded coolly to the plan, saying that “the Palestinian people should have a voice and a vote ... through a revitalized Palestinian Authority.”



*Exiled Palestinian politician Mohammed Dahlan in 2021.*

The PA, naturally, hates the plan. A spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, derided it as “aimed at continuing Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories and preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state.” So does Hamas; Palestinian analyst Mustafa Ibrahim dismissed it as “a vision solely centered around Israel and its interests, with no regard for the humanity or rights of Palestinians.”

Others propose alternative schemes. Mohammed Dahlan, a Gazan politician in exile, foresees a new Palestinian leader of Gaza (himself?) ruling with Arab state support. Yisrael Beytenu party leader Avigdor Liberman believes the Egyptians should take control of Gaza “as a mandate of

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<sup>1</sup> In more detail: Days after the Oslo Accords went into effect, the Multilateral Steering Group of the multilateral talks on Middle East peace established the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) as the principal coordination mechanism on policy and political matters related to economic development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The AHLC subsequently established the Local Aid Coordination Committee (LACC) to devolve the donor coordination process. In turn, the LACC established twelve subcommittees, known as Sector Working Groups.

the United Nations and the Arab League.” Natan Sharansky, the democracy advocate, hopes Saudis and Emiratis will help build “an independent economy, a normal education, normal housing, a civil society.” Nearly 40 percent of Israelis, including two prominent government ministers, want Jewish settlement of the territory.

The second criticism accepts that Gaza remain a separate territory but holds that Israel cannot find “local actors” to work with. They have several reasons to reject the relative optimism implicit to Netanyahu’s plan.

- Anti-Zionism has deep and longstanding roots in Gaza. Already, in 1967, Gazan school books instructed with examples like, “You have five Israelis. You kill three of them. How many Israelis are left to be killed?” Oct. 7, in other words, built on a long-existing base and reflects Gazan views.
- Would you trust Israel more than you fear Hamas? Khalil Shikaki of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research concludes from his polling that “Israel will find essentially no one willing to step in to replace the Israeli army” and so “will have no choice but to run” Gaza itself.
- Some critics recall Israel’s “Village Leagues” experiment of 1978-82 to build relations with moderate West Bankers. It failed, precisely because

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of a weak-kneed Israeli security establishment.<sup>2</sup>

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri derides Israeli efforts to rule Gaza as

“pointless” and predicts they “will never succeed.” Former head of Israel’s National Security Council Meir Ben Shabbat agrees, expecting that Hamas “will clearly continue to be the dominant power in the Gaza Strip.” The *Economist* newspaper concludes that Gaza will become “another of the Middle East’s failed states, broken but never rebuilt.”

The following analysis supports the Netanyahu plan and its implicit optimism,<sup>3</sup> arguing for what I call a *Decent Gaza* run by decent Gazans.<sup>4</sup> My hope rests on the fact that Gazans have endured something monstrous and possibly unique in human experience over the past fifteen years: exploitation by their rulers as cannon fodder for public relations. This means that, however anti-Zionist they may be, most Gazans despise Hamas and desperately want to move on, even if that means working with the Zionist enemy, and are ready to run a typical Middle East-style police state.

## Hamas vs. Gazans

That “monstrous and possibly unique experience” lays the premise for anti-Hamas sentiments. Throughout history, dictators have seen their troops as expendable human drones replaceable with new conscripts. Russia’s disregard of its Wagner prison recruits in the Battle of Bakhmut typifies this casual use of cheap manpower. It hardly

<sup>2</sup> They also recall the [Iraqi Governing Council](#), the American-sponsored provisional government in Iraq from mid-2003 to mid-2004. Intended to represent ethnic, religious, and ideological elements, it failed to acquire legitimacy, instead being seen as a [U.S. creature](#).

<sup>3</sup> Despite my oft-repeated mantra that pessimism builds a Middle East specialist’s career.

<sup>4</sup> This article builds on a preliminary version, “[A Decent Outcome Is Possible in Gaza](#),” *Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 17, 2023.

mattered to Russia's President Vladimir Putin how much of his cannon fodder perished, so long as the front line moved forward. Battlefield gains justified any loss of life.

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Then there is Hamas, the jihadi organization that has ruled Gaza since 2007. For seventeen years, it has implemented an opposite and perhaps historically unique purpose: purposefully tormenting its subject population. Rather than sacrifice soldiers for battlefield gains, it sacrifices civilians for public relations purposes.

Hamas repeatedly attacks Israel to provoke retaliation, correctly expecting that the destruction and suffering in Gaza will bring support from antisemites and radicals of all persuasions, including Palestinian nationalists, Islamists, far-leftists, far-rightists, and sundry dictatorships. After Hamas attacks and Israel retaliates, blame for the violence quickly shifts from Hamas to Israel, to Hamas' benefit.<sup>5</sup> Perversely, the more misery endured by Gazans, the more convincingly can Hamas accuse Israel of aggression—and the wider and the more vehement its support.

To ensure that Gazan civilians will be rendered hungry, homeless, injured, and dead, Hamas bases troops and missiles in mosques, churches, schools, hospitals, and private homes. An Emirati political figure, Dirar Belhoul al-Falasi, explained in one case that "Hamas fired a rocket from the hospital's roof, so that Israel would bomb this hospital."

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<sup>5</sup> Plus, the "Gazan Health Ministry," aka Hamas, issues death figures that dwarf whatever losses Israel suffered. For example, the 1,200 Israelis massacred on Oct. 7 pale in comparison to the alleged Gazan figure of [about 30,000](#) in late February, as reported with a straight face by the world's leading media.

Hamas calls on Gazans to serve as human shields. It parks vehicles in the roads to block civilians from moving southwards and out of harm's

way. It shoots would-be refugees.

The U.S. government has noted this pattern of behavior. In 2014, the diplomat Dennis Ross commented that Gazans paid a "staggering" price for Hamas' aggression but its leaders "have never been concerned about that. For them, Palestinians' pain and suffering are tools to exploit, not conditions to end." Douglas Feith, a former high-ranking Pentagon official, correctly finds it "unprecedented for a party to adopt a war strategy to maximize civilian deaths *on its own side*." He dubs this "not a human shield strategy [but] a human *sacrifice* strategy."

A trove of evidence—polling, demonstrations, and statements—suggests that Gazans understand this Hamas strategy and reject serving as its pawns in an obsessive and illusory jihad.

## **Gazans vs. Hamas I: Polling Data**

For starters, polling makes this evident. Fortunately, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy conducted an extensive poll of Gazans in July 2023. Its findings include:

- 40 percent of Gazans view Hamas negatively.
- 42 percent hope that "someday we can be friends with Israelis, since

- we are all human beings after all.”
- 44 percent agree that “We should recognize that we will never defeat Israel and that fighting just makes things worse.”
  - 47 percent say the Abraham Accords have had a positive impact.
  - 47 percent say “it would be better for us if we were part of Israel than in PA or Hamas ruled lands.”
  - 50 percent want Hamas to “stop calling for the destruction of Israel and instead accept a permanent two-state solution based on the 1967 borders.”
  - 50 percent agree that “If Saudi Arabia normalizes relations with Israel, [the] Palestinian leadership should also normalize relations and end the conflict.”
  - 52 percent view the Muslim Brotherhood negatively.
  - 59 percent support “the Palestinian resumption of negotiations with Israel.”
  - 60 percent acknowledge that when they hear about developments in Syria, Yemen, and other places, “I feel that my situation is actually not bad.”
  - 61 percent wish more Israeli jobs were offered in Gaza and the West Bank.
  - 62 percent want Hamas to preserve the cease-fire with Israel.
  - 63 percent seek direct personal contacts and dialogue with Israelis.
  - 67 percent believe that “Right now, the Palestinians should focus on practical matters like jobs, health care, education, and everyday stability, not on big political plans or resistance

options.”

- 72 percent agree that Palestinians should look more to Arab governments like Jordan or Egypt to “help improve our situation.”
- 72 percent concur that “Hamas has been unable to improve the lives of Palestinians in Gaza.”
- 76 percent want Arab governments to “take a more active role in Palestinian-Israeli peacemaking, offering incentives to both sides to take more moderate positions.”

**82 percent agree that “Palestinians should push harder to replace their own political leaders with more effective and less corrupt ones.”**

- 79 percent believe that “Right now, internal political and economic reform is more important for us than any foreign policy issue.”
- 82 percent agree that “Palestinians should push harder to replace their own political leaders with more effective and less corrupt ones.”
- 87 percent find that “Many people are more preoccupied with their personal lives than with politics.”

An Arab Barometer [survey](#) of Gazans completed the day before Oct. 7 confirms these results, finding that

Gazans were more likely to blame their material predicament on Hamas’s leadership than on Israel’s economic blockade. ... Overall, 73 percent of Gazans favored a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict. On the eve of Hamas's October 7 attack, just 20 percent of Gazans favored a military solution that could result in the destruction of the state of Israel.

Its pollsters concluded that,

rather than supporting Hamas, the vast majority of Gazans have been frustrated with the armed group's ineffective governance as they endure extreme economic hardship. Most Gazans do not align themselves with Hamas's ideology, either. Unlike Hamas, whose goal is to destroy the Israeli state, the majority of survey respondents favored a two-state solution with an independent Palestine and Israel existing side by side.

Amaney Jamal of Princeton University, who participated in the Arab Barometer survey, estimates that 27 percent of Gazans would have voted for Hamas before Oct. 7. Gershon Baskin, a far-left Israeli with many connections in Gaza, agrees: the pre-Oct. 7 support for Hamas was well under 30 percent "because in Gaza they have experienced 17 years of Hamas rule."

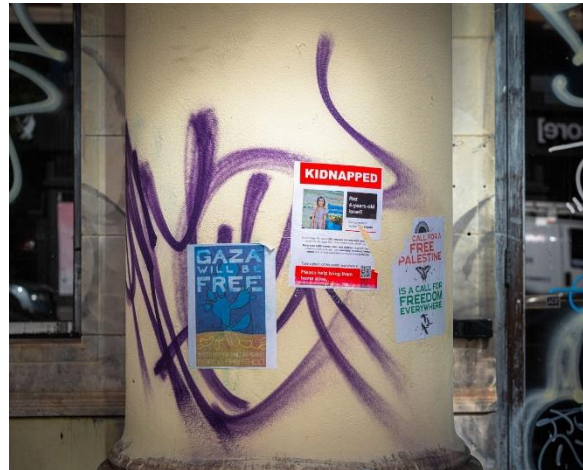
According to a Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research poll conducted six weeks after Oct. 7, Gazan support for Hamas stands at 42 percent, a slight increase over the 38 percent three months earlier. In other words, the massacre did slightly increase backing for Hamas, but most Gazans reject it.

## Gazans vs. Hamas II: Demonstrations

Polling in Gaza's brutal environment may be vulnerable to manipulation; other manifestations confirm the anti-Hamas

sentiment. Public demonstrations offer one vivid example.

A video of hundreds of Gazans evacuated from the north to the south of Gaza shows them chanting "Down with Hamas." Outside Deir al-Balah's Al Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, displaced northern Gazans demanded that



Hamas release Israeli hostages, end the fighting, and make possible their return home. Children held white pieces of paper with "Yes to giving back the hostages." Protesters shouted out:

*Flyers put up by Palestinians opposed to Hamas pointing out the Israeli hostages taken.*

The people want to end the war! We put our trust in Allah, he is our best supporter! We don't want [food] coupons! We want to live! We want to go back home, to Beit Lahia! We want to go back home, to Al-Shati! We want to go back home, to Jabalia!

Videos of a demonstration in Rafah show Gazans cursing Hamas and Yahya Sinwar. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Military Intelligence Directorate's Unit 504 has held tens of thousands telephone conversations with Gazans, urging civilians to evacuate combat areas. Along the way, it learns about local resistance to Hamas, as when locals

chased Hamas away when it tried to take over their homes.

The issue of Hamas stealing humanitarian aid provokes high emotions.

- After a Hamas gunman shot and killed Ahmed Barika approaching a truck that dispensed aid in southern Gaza, his family cursed Hamas, set tires and a Hamas police station on fire, and vowed to avenge his death.”
- “A man who was told off by a Hamas officer for cutting the bread line took a chair and smashed it over his head.”
- “Clashes between Hamas operatives and civilians over supplies, with the civilians yelling expletives at the gunmen.”
- “Angry crowds hurled stones at Hamas police who cut in front of a water line and beat them with their fists until they scattered.”

Further reports indicate that “Some Palestinians are openly challenging the authority of Hamas ... in scenes unimaginable just a month ago.” Those scenes include:

- “In the middle of the night, hundreds of people [hiding in a UN shelter] shouted insults against Hamas and cried out that

**“People are dying every minute. Hamas is the one that dragged us into this terrible vortex.”**

they wanted the war to end” as “Hamas rockets streamed overhead toward Israel.”

- Gazans “openly criticize Hamas in front of TV cameras” and call Hamas “betrayers of the Palestinian people.”
- Residents “are praying that Israel will destroy Hamas and are saying it out loud.”
- Evacuees to Gaza’s south commonly greet each other with “May God take revenge upon Hamas.”

In a live televised scene, a passerby disrupted a speech by a Hamas spokesman, brandishing his bandaged hand in the air and shouting “May God hold you to account, Hamas!” The much-shared clip of this incident led to Hamas issuing a public threat: “We warn against publishing any pictures, videos or materials that are offensive to the image of the steadfastness and unity of our people in Gaza.” To prevent protests, JNS reports, Hamas “deployed security personnel to refugee centers, schools and other locations.”

In all, Maj.-Gen. Rasan Aliyan, who heads the Israel Defense Forces’ liaison office with Palestinians, noted “more and more evidence of public criticism voiced by the residents of Gaza against the Hamas terrorist organization.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For many more examples, see the collection published by [MEMRI](#) at “Growing Criticism of Hamas and Its Officials by Gaza Residents: They Brought a Needless War Upon Us; Our Lives Are Worthless in Their Eyes; We Yearn to See the End of Hamas.” It also includes a list of pre-Oct. 7 MEMRI publications “complaining of its ineffectual, corrupt and tyrannical rule and of the disconnect between the people of Gaza and the Hamas leaders abroad, who live in luxury and care nothing for the lives of the Gazans.”

## Gazans vs. Hamas III: Interviews

A survey of the press prompts the Gatestone Institute's Bassam Tawil to conclude that anti-Hamas Gazans "have been almost completely ignored by mainstream media in the West." Arab media likewise "has made it a habit of ignoring any Palestinian who dares to criticize Hamas." Still, dissident views come out.

Live media interviews on Al Jazeera and other Arabic media that go awry inadvertently broadcast hatred of Hamas and its state backers.

- An elderly, wounded man: Hamas members "come and hide among the people. Why are they hiding among the people? They can go to hell and hide there." The journalist cut him off.
- A young girl: "Hamas is putting the people of Gaza in danger. Its fighters are hiding in the tunnels while Gazan civilians are the victims."
- An elderly woman in Khan Yunis asked about foreign aid: all of it "goes to the [tunnels] underground. It does not reach all the people. ... Hamas takes everything to their homes." She concluded with defiance: "They can take me, shoot me, or do whatever they want to me."
- A man on the street: "May Allah settle the score with Qatar and Turkey," at which point, the interviewer cut him off.

Gazans risk talking to foreign reporters.

- A businessman, 56: "People are dying every minute. Hamas is the

one that dragged us into this terrible vortex."

- A hairdresser from the north, now sheltering in the south. "Damn Hamas. May God be my witness: If I see Ismail Haniyeh, I will hit him with my slippers."

Sometimes they even let themselves be identified, as in a *Daily Beast* [report](#).

- Hasan Ahmed, 39: "There is no democracy in Gaza when you want to speak against Hamas or its de facto government. We fear they will arrest us during the war, or after the war if we spoke against them. They can easily kill us even, and tell the world we are spies."
- Salam Tareq, 33: "Thieves are spreading in our area. They are going to the evacuated houses, even the partially destroyed ones, and they steal everything possible."
- Um Ahmed, 55: "Hamas has lost support in Gaza."

They also publicize their views. An impassioned young Gazan man made an Internet video to criticize Hamas for neglecting the interests of Gaza's population, especially not having planned for the dire consequences of Oct. 7. Israeli intelligence Unit 504 gathers many such opinions about Hamas, such as: "We're dying and they're saving themselves." The "[Voices of Gaza](#)" project of the Center for Peace Communications (CPC) collected bitter expressions from real-life Gazans.

- "When Hamas distributes the aid, only Hamas members get the aid." The same applies to Gaza's healthcare system, where "Hamas families get preferential treatment" and the most urgent needs of ordinary



Gazans “could be delayed for a long time so that Hamas loyalists are treated first.”

- “Hamas bears responsibility for all the wars, but we’re the ones who pay the price.”
- “Ending Hamas is the demand of young and old alike in Gaza.”
- “We welcome any change that will save us from this indignation called Hamas.”

Gazans living abroad can speak frankly, especially on the delicate topic of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, the Oct. 7 mastermind. One exile says that Gazans “were surprised” by the attack and calls Sinwar “a fool and a madman. ... We know that Hamas started this war, what Sinwar did was suicidal.” In all, “People are very tired of war. It’s enough—how much more? Enough.” In a video of his interrogation by the Israeli government, Yousef al-Mansi, a former “communications minister” for Hamas criticized Sinwar: he “feels like he is above everyone else” and has “delusions of grandeur.” Further,

People in the Gaza Strip say that Sinwar and his group destroyed us, we must get rid of them. ... I have not seen anyone in the Gaza Strip who supports Sinwar; nobody likes Sinwar. There are people who, day and night, pray that God will free us from him.

In all, he says, Hamas “destroyed the Gaza Strip, set it back 200 years.” Mkhaimar Abusada, a political scientist at Gaza’s Al-Azhar University who fled Gaza, reports on “a lot of criticism among Palestinians that the Oct. 7 attack—the killing of Israeli civilians, women and children—was a strategic mistake that provoked Israel into the current war.” He predicts that. “Once the war is over,

you will hear more and more criticism against Hamas.” Even a Gazan living in Gaza found the courage to spew venom against Sinwar:

I want to convey my message to the Hamas government. May God take revenge on you [and] curse your forefathers. ... May God curse you, O Sinwar, you son of a dog. May God take revenge on you, you’ve destroyed us. ... Give the [Israeli] prisoners [back to Israel], these dogs who are in your possession. ... Sinwar is underground, hiding together with [Muhammad] Deif and all the other disgusting ones.

Another anti-Sinwar protestor spoke called for a “revolution of the hungry.” Eventually whole crowds bellowed complaints against Sinwar and other Hamas leaders, reportedly leading to Hamas forces firing on the demonstrators.

In all, these many data points point to a solid majority of Gazans wanting liberation from the tyranny of Hamas. While few Gazans accept Israel and most adhere to the concept of “resistance,” Joseph Braude of CPC argues, “a substantial majority oppose Hamas’ brand of resistance—that is, starting wars it can’t win while hiding in bunkers and leaving civilians to suffer the consequences.” Further, “a large number of Gazans, while opposed to Israel, adopt a pragmatic outlook on cooperation if it delivers tangible benefit to them. These pragmatists, combined with the minority who believe in coexistence as a principle, constitute a solid base of support for any post-Hamas administration committed to reconstruction.” Together, they “show that a different, brighter, and more peaceful future is possible.”

## Support for a Decent Gaza

Despite the high-profile pessimism about decent Gaza, this prospect finds solid support. Bassam Tawil finds that while “many Palestinians continue to support Hamas,” increasing numbers of them “deplore what the Hamas terrorists did and who are willing to speak out.” The CPC reports that its network in Gaza includes “a critical mass of educators, intellectuals, and activists who oppose Hamas and support systemic change and development. ... The possibility of a brighter future for Gaza hinges on a smart plan to empower these and other Gazans who share the will to reach for it.” West Bank human rights activist Bassam Eid hopes that “Israel will very soon free Gaza from Hamas. After the war, the best thing to do is to give Gaza to its own people to rule.” The clans in each of Gaza’s five districts should take charge. “Let those big tribes start ruling their own cities by themselves. ... Those tribes will provide a very good security to Israel.”

Arab state leaders, one report finds, support a post-war Gaza ruled by “neither Abbas nor Hamas.” Abbas was told to stay away, Hamas told that “Not one dollar will flow as long as you control the Gaza Strip.”

Even U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken endorsed something along these lines: “We can’t have a reversion to the status quo, with Hamas running Gaza. We also can’t have ... Israel running or controlling Gaza. ... In between those ... are a variety of possible permutations that we’re looking at very closely now.” Blinken wants Israel to “be a partner of the Palestinian leaders who are willing to lead their people and living side by side in peace with Israel.” U.K. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly agrees: “As soon as practicable, a move towards a peace-loving Palestinian

leadership is the most desired outcome” in Gaza.

Many Israelis are on board. Mordechai Kedar of Bar-Ilan University has long argued for Israel to deal with Palestinian clans. Contrasting the success of the United Arab Emirates, with its seven clans, with disasters in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, and Libya, he concludes that one clan per government offers “the best way to establish a state in the Middle East.” Such states, he finds, seek stability and prosperity, not foes. They have no need for “an external enemy like Israel in order to galvanize all the groups into one nation.” Member of Knesset Moshe Saada wants something similar: “A local mukhtar [village elder] will rule civil life in each area. There will be no central government.”



*U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken (left) meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in January 2023.*

Shaul Bartal of the BESA Center foresees two stages after Israeli forces seize Gaza: “a full Israeli military government” and then “the integration of local and regional forces, including military forces, into the newly formed government.” He sees these made up of Palestinian, Egyptian, and other elements. Jonathan Rynhold and Toby Greene of Bar-Ilan University want Israel to plan “how it can incorporate elements of the existing bureaucracy into a stable post-Hamas

political order.” Glen Segell of Haifa University hopes that “educated and competent Palestinians” will establish local committees that “assume management of utilities such as water, electricity, education, and health together with the IDF.” Natan Sharansky holds that only a free Palestinian society in which people “enjoy a normal life, normal freedom, the opportunity to vote and have their own human rights” can assure Israel’s security. A poll found 21 percent of Israelis endorse such a Palestinian government.

American analysts concur. Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy hopes that “out of this crisis comes opportunity ... to make in Gaza a reasonably well-functioning administration that puts first the needs of its citizens, and not the ideology of its rulers.” Former government officials Lewis Libby and Douglas J. Feith note that for the Gazans who oppose Hamas, the coming months will present an opportunity, for the outside world will eagerly assist “Gazans who take a stand for a new, honest government that respects its people and favors peace through mutual compromise with Israel.” Jeff Jacoby, a *Boston Globe* columnist, sees an Israeli administration “explicitly committed to nourishing a healthy civil society” as the best path to “effective and peaceful self-rule.”

## Conclusion

Israel can reasonably expect to find a substantial cohort of Gazans ready to work with it to establish a new authority in Gaza that begins to return them to normal life. These Gazans will take on a wide range of tasks: policing, utilities, municipal services, administration, communications, teaching, urban planning, and so on.

While this may sound like wishful thinking, it bears recalling that Gazans not that long ago led decent lives under Israeli rule. Gaza

and the West Bank in the 1970s, recounts historian Efraim Karsh, “constituted the fourth fastest-growing economy in the world—ahead of such ‘wonders’ as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Korea, and substantially ahead of Israel itself.” Medicine, electricity, schools, literacy—all flourished. Gazans benefited from refrigerators, clean running water, and much else. Gazans are not immune to the charms of normal life.

Unfortunately, Israel failed to cultivate relations with relatively friendly Gazans and lacked decent Gazan partners in its first period of rule, 1967-2005. Then, in an act of historic stupidity, it handed the territory to the genocidal Yasir Arafat. In a further mistake, it not only permitted the even more horrific Hamas to control Gaza after 2007 but encouraged external funders such as Qatar.

Call the new entity the Revitalized Palestinian Authority if you like, but it must have no connection whatsoever to the execrable Palestinian Authority that rules parts of the West Bank. Nor should Arab or international bodies take part in its administration.

Decent Gaza means tough Israeli military rule overseeing a tough police state along the lines of what exists in Egypt and Jordan, countries where one can lead a normal life so long as one stays out of trouble and never, ever criticizes the ruler. Gaza can become decent, not at war with its neighbor and economically viable. Will Israelis have the acumen and stamina to make this happen? Can they retrieve something positive out of tragedy?

**Daniel Pipes** (DanielPipes.org, @DanielPipes) is president of the Middle East Forum and author of, most recently, *Islamism vs. The West: 35 Years*

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