From Sacha Wigdorovits

On January 26, 2026, two and a quarter years after his murder and subsequent kidnapping, the Israeli army IDF found the body of Ran Gvili in a cemetery near Gaza City and returned it to Israel – the last hostage of the massacre of October 7, 2023, who has not yet been recovered. This is the first time since 2014 that no Israeli, alive or dead, has been held captive by Palestinian terrorists in Gaza.

The return of Ran Gvili was accompanied by great emotion and relief in Israel and in the Jewish community worldwide. But no one is under the illusion that peace between Israel and the Palestinians has progressed as a result.

The first phase of US President Donald Trump's 20-point peace plan has been completed. And as a result, Israel has agreed to reopen the Rafah border crossing leading to Egypt for the movement of people – with close Israeli control over who passes through. And even before the repatriation of Ran Gvili, President Trump had already announced details of his peace organization for Gaza and who would be involved in it.

But what happens next is still uncertain. The plan now includes – at least in theory – the biggest and most difficult "chunk" of the entire plan: the disarmament of the terrorist organization Hamas and the demilitarization of Gaza. This is the most important prerequisite for the reconstruction of the coastal strip and also for the further withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces IDF. As agreed, the IDF gave up its previously captured positions last October and withdrew behind the so-called "Yellow Line".

How and whether Hamas will be disarmed at all is currently the subject of widely differing information. The American side is expressing confidence that the terrorist organization will lay down its arms and surrender. First, Hamas would hand over its heavy weapons, in particular its rockets and the plans for its tunnel network. Then a buy-back program for its light weapons, the rifles, will be launched, according to Washington.

Hamas itself promises that it will support the Palestinian government of technocrats for Gaza envisaged in the peace plan. However, according to the terrorist organization, there can be no question of agreeing to complete disarmament. On the contrary, it has declared that it is prepared to take on police duties as part of the new administration.

That would be like passing the buck. Hamas has not only fought the Israeli army in Gaza, but has also acted with extreme brutality against hostile Palestinian factions. Above all, however, Israel would never accept an amnesty for those terrorists who bestially abused and murdered 1,200 babies, children, women and men on October 7, 2023 by exchanging their combat uniform for a police uniform. There is talk of a total of 10,000 Hamas fighters.

The International Stabilization Force (ISF), as envisaged in the peace plan, has been conspicuously silent. This was supposed to play a leading role in the demilitarization of Gaza. But in connection with the disarmament of Hamas – without which demilitarization is impossible – there has been no talk of the ISF for a long time.

It is also not yet known how the ISF will be financed and who will be part of it. Various countries, such as Italy, have been asked whether they would participate. And others have announced their willingness to participate. Turkey, for example, has pledged to provide troops and Qatar is also being discussed. Alongside Iran, these two states are Hamas' main supporters. Therefore, a troop presence in Gaza is unacceptable to the Israeli government, and it has made this known. So far, the only thing that is certain about the IFS is that it will be commanded by the American Major General Jasper Jeffers.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is not unhappy about the sluggish implementation of the Gaza peace plan. Firstly, it is spared actions or concessions that could break up the governing alliance (for example, if the USA were to make concessions to Hamas on the disarmament issue). Above all, however, its foreign policy focus is currently on Iran. This is because US President Trump could attempt to use military means to overthrow the Mullah regime, which is hated by his own people, in the coming days. Israel would certainly be involved in such a confrontation. The government in Tehran has already officially announced that it will retaliate against Israel with all severity if it is attacked by the USA.

It can therefore not be ruled out that the IDF would actively participate in a US attack on Iran. After all, attack is known to be the best defense. The Jewish state has been pursuing this doctrine not just since last year, when it won the 12-day war against Iran, but since 1967, when Israel surprised and defeated Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, which had allied themselves to destroy the Jewish state, in a surprise attack – in half the time as it did last year against Iran. Without the support of the USA.

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