



On October 10, 2025, five experts and former high-ranking officials discussed the “Gaza First Phase Agreement” – the first ceasefire and hostage agreement between Israel and Hamas brokered by the Trump administration after more than two years of war. The Washington Institute is considered one of the most influential US think tanks on Middle East policy.

Michael Herzog, former Israeli ambassador to the USA and IDF brigadier general:

Why the agreement succeeded this time

- Maturity of the situation and US leadership

The agreement was made possible because both sides were tired of war and the Trump administration used the moment to force both parties to the negotiating table with a calculated mixture of pressure and incentives.

- Focus on what is feasible

The plan initially concentrated on phase 1 – ceasefire, hostage release, prisoner exchange and troop withdrawal – while sensitive issues such as disarmament and the removal of Hamas from power were deliberately postponed. This created room for negotiation in the first place.

- Hamas’ weakness as leverage

Hamas was severely weakened by Israeli military pressure and the threat of a further offensive. At the same time, the USA exerted massive political pressure via a united Arab-Muslim front (Qatar, Turkey).

- Israel’s domestic political logic

After two years of war, Israel had to realize that the goals of

“defeating Hamas” and “freeing hostages” cannot be achieved at the same time. The agreement allows the hostages to be rescued first without giving up the security claim – IDF control over the majority of Gaza remains in place.

- Risks and outlook

Success depends on an active, permanent US role. The involvement of Qatar and Turkey harbors risks due to their proximity to Hamas; counterweights are therefore needed from pro-Western Arab players such as the United Arab Emirates.

Conclusion

The deal was only possible because Washington pragmatically opted for step-by-step solutions, reprioritized Israel’s war aims and tactically engaged regional power centers. However, its continued existence depends on whether the US can maintain the fragile balance between pressure, protection and regional influence.

Ghaith al-Omari, former advisor to the Palestinian negotiating team:

Weaknesses of the Palestinian Authority and power vacuum after the war

- Lack of role of the PA

The absence of the Palestinian Authority (PA) from the negotiations is an expression of its institutional weakness and political irrelevance – not a cause, but a symptom of an encrusted system.

- Call for a change of leadership

A renewal of the PA requires Mahmoud Abbas’ resignation and a reform of its structures in order to regain legitimacy, the ability to act and trust.

- Risk of Hamas legitimacy

Without rapid PA reform, Hamas threatens to establish itself as the sole interlocutor of the international community – with long-term consequences for Palestinian statehood.

- Regional architecture

Egypt is planning an intra-Palestinian dialogue platform, but the involvement of Hamas shows that it continues to shape the discourse. Stabilization requires Saudi Arabia and the UAE as a counterweight to Turkey and Qatar, which favour Hamas.

- US role

Washington must exert pressure on Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to integrate them into the post-war order – otherwise the power vacuum will remain.

Conclusion

Without far-reaching reform of the PA and regional balance through Saudi-Emirati participation, the peace process threatens to inadvertently consolidate Hamas' political legitimacy.

David Makovsky, Former advisor to the US State Department:

Domestic political dynamics in Israel and Trump's influence

- Public sentiment as leverage

The deal was made politically possible by broad Israeli support for an end to the war and the release of the hostages.

- Netanyahu's narrative

Prime Minister Netanyahu will present the success domestically as

the result of Israeli strength and US partnership – not as American pressure.

- Opposition counter-proposal

His opponents, on the other hand, emphasize that Trump forced the agreement and that Netanyahu's hesitation caused unnecessary casualties and reputational damage.

- Pre-election calculations

An early election date would paradoxically give Netanyahu freedom of action, as the coalition would act as less of a bargaining chip.

- Open questions

It remains unclear whether international forces will be involved in Hamas' disarmament and to what extent Israel will withdraw militarily – Jerusalem wants to reserve the right to conduct military operations.

Conclusion

Trump's diplomacy is shifting Israel's domestic political axis: the deal is becoming a stage for election campaign narratives, while its practical implementation remains open in terms of security policy.

Neomi Neumann former head of the research department of the Israeli domestic intelligence service:

Hamas' tactics, successes and political upgrading

- Tactical adaptation instead of a change of course

Hamas is showing flexibility out of compulsion, not moderation – it

is pausing the fight in order to regenerate militarily and strengthen itself politically.

- Causes of the willingness to negotiate

Pressure from Israel's offensive, fear of internal Palestinian criticism and massive US/Arab pressure (especially Turkey, Qatar) forced Hamas to the table.

- Strategic gains

Hamas achieved three goals:

1. prevention of Israeli-Saudi normalization,
2. international visibility of the Palestinian cause,
3. release of senior prisoners, strengthening its political base.

- Symbolic upgrading

As the only Palestinian representative in the talks, Hamas gained political legitimacy and consolidated its claim to a leadership role.

- PA weakness as a catalyst

The absence of Mahmoud Abbas reinforced the impression that Hamas was the only Palestinian force capable of taking action.

Conclusion:

Hamas lost militarily, but gained symbolically: the ceasefire clearly shifts the political legitimacy in the Palestinian camp in its favor.

Nickolay Mladenov, former UN Special Envoy and current Director of the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy (UAE):

International security and governance of the post-war order

- US leadership key to success

Trump's 20-point plan used determined diplomatic pressure and a broad Arab-Muslim coalition to force the ceasefire.

- Humanitarian and institutional pillars

The plan creates both immediate humanitarian relief and the framework for new governance structures in Gaza – with regional embedding.

- Incomplete implementation

Hamas ignored key Israeli demands for demilitarization and deradicalization – an indication of the fragility of peace.

- Need for external stabilization

A permanent US presence, plus European and regional involvement (financial and military), are crucial to prevent relapses.

- Recommended mechanism

A UN Security Council resolution should create a multinational intervention force with a robust mandate – more than traditional blue helmets – to ensure security and governance.

Conclusion

Without a credible international security architecture, the ceasefire threatens to disintegrate – stability depends on continued US leadership and multinational assertiveness. Source: [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/assessments-of-the-gaza-agreement)