



## Post-Ceasefire Humanitarian Pathways in Gaza

January 17, 2025

### Context and Background Analysis

The Hamas-Israel conflict that erupted in October 2023 was the culmination of decades of tension, territorial disputes, and cycles of violence. Gaza, a densely populated 365-square-kilometer territory, has been at the centre of this hostility since 2007, when Hamas assumed control following a violent split from the Palestinian Authority. This marked the beginning of an ongoing Israeli blockade aimed at curbing Hamas's military capabilities, while also severely restricting the movement of people and goods. The blockade, coupled with Hamas's governance challenges, created a dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, characterized by poverty, unemployment, and collapsing infrastructure—conditions that fuelled recurring clashes between Israel and militants in Gaza.

The immediate trigger for the war came in September 2023, during confrontations between Israeli police and Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The clashes, occurring during overlapping Jewish and Muslim holidays, reignited tensions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, escalating into widespread protests. On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched its largest-ever military operation against Israel, named "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm." This surprise assault involved over 5,000 rockets fired into Israeli territory, combined with coordinated ground incursions into border towns. The attack resulted in the deaths of over 1,400 Israelis and the capture of more than 200 hostages. The unprecedented scale of the assault prompted Israel to declare war, launching "Operation Swords of Iron" in response. Initial airstrikes targeted Hamas's infrastructure, while the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) prepared for a ground invasion.

The war quickly escalated into one of the most destructive conflicts in recent history. By November 2023, the IDF had launched a large-scale ground invasion of Gaza, targeting urban centres such as Gaza City, Khan Younis, and Rafah. The fighting caused extensive casualties and displacement, with over 15,000 Palestinians killed and 1.5 million forced to flee their homes. Meanwhile, Hamas and its allied militant groups, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, continued launching rockets into Israeli cities like Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, and Be'er Sheva. The conflict also risked regional escalation, with cross-border skirmishes involving Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iranian-backed forces in Syria.

Efforts by Egypt, Qatar, and the United States to mediate a ceasefire in the early months of the conflict failed as both sides pursued maximalist goals. Israel demanded the complete disarmament of Hamas and the release of all hostages, while Hamas sought an end to the blockade and the release of Palestinian prisoners. The situation in Gaza deteriorated rapidly, with hospitals overwhelmed, power outages lasting weeks, and critical shortages of food, water, and medicine. The United Nations and other humanitarian organizations described the conditions as catastrophic, warning of famine and disease outbreaks.

Several key developments in 2024 shaped the trajectory of the conflict and opened the door to ceasefire negotiations. Global criticism of Israel's military campaign mounted, with reports of widespread destruction and civilian casualties prompting calls for restraint from the United Nations and European Union. Simultaneously, Hamas suffered significant military setbacks as Israel destroyed much of its tunnel network, weapons stockpiles, and command infrastructure. By mid-2024, backchannel negotiations led to limited prisoner exchanges, creating an opening for broader ceasefire talks. The United States intensified its mediation efforts, with Special Envoy Steve Witkoff working closely with Qatar and Egypt to bridge gaps between the parties. A pivotal moment came on January 10, 2025, when a large-scale Israeli airstrike targeting a senior Hamas leader caused significant civilian casualties, prompting renewed urgency for a truce.

On January 16, 2025, after weeks of intense negotiations, both sides agreed to a ceasefire brokered by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States. The agreement included a phased withdrawal of IDF forces from Gaza, the release of 33 Israeli hostages in exchange for 1,000 Palestinian prisoners, and a framework for delivering humanitarian aid and beginning Gaza's reconstruction. Control over critical areas like the Philadelphi Corridor and Netzarim Corridor would transition to international and Egyptian forces under strict monitoring. Additionally, the blockade would be partially eased, with the reopening of key border crossings such as Rafah and Kerem Shalom for humanitarian and commercial purposes.

The ceasefire represents a fragile but critical step toward ending hostilities and addressing Gaza's humanitarian crisis. However, the conflict left devastating impacts, including over 25,000 deaths, the displacement of millions, and billions in infrastructure damage. International actors have pledged \$5 billion for reconstruction, but the challenge remains to ensure transparency and prevent Hamas's rearmament. While the ceasefire provides temporary relief, the underlying causes of the conflict—territorial disputes, ideological divisions, and the blockade—remain unresolved, leaving the region vulnerable to future escalations.



## Ceasefire Agreement Explained

### Ceasefire Phases and Timeline

#### Phase 1: Initial Ceasefire and Stabilization (January 19 – March 1, 2025)

Ceasefire Enforcement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hostilities will cease at midnight on <b>January 19, 2025</b>, monitored by United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) teams.</li><li>Both sides commit to avoiding escalatory acts, including rocket launches, airstrikes, incursions, and border violations.</li></ul>
Hostage & Prisoner Exchange:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hamas is to release 33 Israeli hostages, including women, children, and elderly individuals, over six weeks.</li><li>Israel will release 1,000 Palestinian prisoners, prioritizing minors, women, and non-violent offenders. The process will be monitored by Qatari and Egyptian negotiators.</li></ul>
Israeli Military Withdrawal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By <b>January 22, 2025</b>, IDF will withdraw from northern areas, including Salah al-Din Road and al-Rasheed Road, transitioning control to international observers.</li><li>By <b>February 10, 2025</b>, IDF forces will leave the Netzarim Corridor, ending military operations in central Gaza.</li></ul>
Humanitarian Assistance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Daily entry of 600 aid trucks through Kerem Shalom Crossing, with 200 specifically for food, 150 for medical supplies, and 50 for fuel.</li></ul>
Special Aid Allocations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Reconstruction materials, including cement and steel, will be allowed under strict monitoring to prevent diversion to military use.</li><li>Fuel supplies will prioritize Gaza's main power plant and hospitals, ensuring 12-hour electricity availability in critical areas.</li><li>Aid delivery will be overseen by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) and local NGOs.</li></ul>
Rafah Crossing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Egypt will reopen Rafah Crossing for humanitarian movement, including patients requiring medical treatment in Egyptian hospitals.</li><li>Entry permits will be expedited for students, traders, and humanitarian workers.</li></ul>

#### Phase 2: Permanent Ceasefire and Full Withdrawal (March 2 – April 12, 2025)

Negotiations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mediators will lead talks to finalize:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Remaining hostage releases.</li><li>Terms for lifting the Gaza blockade.</li><li>Economic relief measures for the region.</li></ul></li></ul>
Complete IDF Withdrawal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By <b>April 12, 2025</b>, Israel will fully withdraw from Gaza, relinquishing control over key areas, including the Netzarim Corridor and the Philadelphi Corridor.</li></ul>
Border Reopening:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Kerem Shalom Crossing:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Will resume full commercial activity, facilitating the movement of goods and essential supplies.</li><li>Exports from Gaza (e.g., textiles, agriculture) will be allowed under a monitoring framework.</li></ul></li><li>Rafah Crossing:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Expanded operations will include civilian movement for education, employment, and medical purposes.</li><li>Egypt will deploy additional security personnel to manage and monitor the crossing.</li></ul></li></ul>



**Phase 3: Reconstruction and Long-Term Stability (April 13, 2025, onwards)**

Reconstruction Efforts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overseen by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), European Union, and Arab League, priorities include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Restoring essential infrastructure, such as the electricity grids, water systems, sewage, telecommunications, and roads.</li><li>◦ Rebuilding homes, schools, and hospitals.</li><li>◦ Supporting agricultural projects and small businesses to revive the local economy.</li></ul></li></ul>
Security Measures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deployment of an international peacekeeping force to monitor borders and key transit routes, including Philadelphi and Netzarim Corridors.</li><li>• Establishment of demilitarized zones with surveillance systems, including drones and radar systems.</li></ul>
Economic Recovery Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishment of industrial zones near Rafah and Kerem Shalom to create jobs and stimulate trade.</li><li>• International investment, led by Qatar and Gulf nations, will fund micro-enterprise programs for residents.</li></ul>

**Transition of Responsibility****Philadelphi Corridor**

The Philadelphi Corridor, a 14-kilometer strip along Gaza's border with Egypt, has been a key security zone due to its history of smuggling tunnels.

**Ceasefire Transition:**

Phase 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Israel will scale back military operations, maintaining checkpoints and observation posts.</li><li>• Egyptian border security forces will coordinate with UN monitors to prepare for full handover.</li></ul>
Phase 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By <b>April 12, 2025</b>, Egypt will assume full control of the corridor, supported by Arab League peacekeepers and EU advisors.</li><li>• Egyptian responsibilities include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Border patrolling to prevent smuggling and arms trafficking.</li><li>◦ Tunnel detection and demolition using advanced radar and drone surveillance.</li><li>◦ Coordinating with international teams to ensure compliance with ceasefire terms.</li></ul></li></ul>
Phase 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Long-term management will involve a joint task force (Egypt, UN, and EU), equipping the corridor with automated surveillance technologies.</li></ul>

**Netzarim Corridor**

Previously controlled by the IDF, the Netzarim Corridor connects southern Gaza with its central regions and is a critical transportation route.

**Ceasefire Transition:**

Phase 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By <b>February 10, 2025</b>, Israel will withdraw, leaving control to international peacekeepers.</li></ul>
Phase 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal security forces will manage day-to-day operations, with oversight from the UN.</li><li>• Responsibilities include ensuring free movement for civilians and goods and maintaining the demilitarized status of the corridor.</li></ul>
Phase 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The corridor will be integrated into Gaza's reconstruction plan, serving as a vital commercial and transportation route to support economic recovery.</li></ul>



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Ceasefire Timeline		
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Day 1 (January 19)	Day 7 (January 25)	Day 16 (February 03)
Ceasefire begins: Temporary suspension of mutual military operations starts.	Israeli forces completely withdraw from Al-Rashid Street eastward to Salah Al-Din Street, dismantling sites.	Indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas begin to discuss the second phase of the agreement.
Israeli forces withdraw eastward and away from populated areas to a border zone in Gaza.	Displaced persons begin returning to their homes in this area without carrying weapons.	
600 trucks of humanitarian aid, including 50 fuel trucks, start entering Gaza daily.	Freedom of movement is allowed for residents throughout Gaza.	
Hamas releases 3 Israeli civilian prisoners.	Hamas releases 4 additional Israeli civilian prisoners.	
Weekly Releases (Starting Day 7)		
Every seven days, Hamas releases 3 additional Israeli prisoners, prioritizing women (civilians and soldiers).		
Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
Day 22 (February 09)	Week 6, Day 42 (March 01)	From March 02 (Post-42 Days)
Israeli forces withdraw from central Gaza (Netsarim Junction and Kuwait Square) east of Salah Al-Din Street.	All remaining civilian prisoners included in the first phase are released by Hamas.	Exchange of bodies and remains between the two parties begins.
Displaced persons continue returning to their homes in northern Gaza.	Israel releases 47 Palestinian prisoners re-arrested after the Shalit deal.	A 3 to 5-year reconstruction plan for Gaza is implemented, focusing on homes, civilian buildings, and infrastructure.
Freedom of movement is maintained for residents in these areas.	If the number of living Israeli prisoners does not reach 33, the difference will be completed with bodies.	Agreements on the terms of the second phase are finalized.
		Crossings open for the movement of people and goods.



## Humanitarian Assistance Conditions

- All commodities will undergo inspection using scanning equipment to ensure they are not diverted for military purposes.
- Fuel deliveries will prioritize:
  - Power generation for Gaza's main electricity plant.
  - Emergency reserves for hospitals and sanitation facilities.
- Egypt will facilitate the movement of humanitarian workers and medical patients.
- Special permits will allow the expedited transit of injured civilians and students studying abroad.
- Aid distribution will be overseen by UNRWA, with additional tracking by local NGOs to ensure equitable access.

## Threat Assessment: Post-Ceasefire Environment in Gaza

Threat	Description	Examples	Risk Level
<b>Armed Disputes and Hostile Actors</b>	Residual armed factions and criminal elements in the Gaza Strip, including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and smaller militant groups and criminal syndicates, continue to pose a significant threat. Political instability and competition for control may result in targeted or incidental threats to humanitarian actors. Renewed cross-border violence due to ceasefire violations or miscalculations remains a high possibility. Humanitarian organizations may be perceived as aligned with political or foreign interests, increasing the risk of verbal or physical attacks.	Ceasefire violations like sporadic rocket launches or border skirmishes involving militant factions. International NGOs targeted during demonstrations.	5
<b>Criminality and Organized Syndicates</b>	Weak law enforcement contributes to increased criminal activity, including theft, extortion, and armed robbery. Humanitarian convoys and warehouses, particularly those carrying high-value items, are prime targets. Criminal groups may also demand payments for "protection" or access, creating additional operational challenges.	Hijacking of aid trucks en route to hospitals. Extortion threats against local staff for "safe passage."	4
<b>Verbal and Physical Attacks on Staff</b>	Frustrations over perceived inequities in aid distribution or unmet expectations can escalate into hostility towards humanitarian staff. Such incidents may occur at distribution points, temporary shelters, or field missions. Staff visibility, especially when associated with international logos, increases exposure to these risks.	Protests escalating into violence near aid distribution sites. Aggression toward staff wearing INGO logos in overcrowded shelters.	4
<b>Kidnappings and Hostage Situations</b>	International staff and, to a lesser extent, national staff, are at risk of being kidnapped by criminal or militant factions seeking ransom, leverage, or propaganda opportunities. Field missions and travel to isolated areas heighten this risk.	Abductions during field assessments in remote areas. Threats of ransom demands targeting high-profile expatriates.	3
<b>Arrest, Intimidation, and Harassment</b>	Humanitarian staff may face intimidation, harassment, or arbitrary arrests by de-facto authorities, factions, or criminal elements. Such incidents disrupt operations and erode staff morale. Surveillance and interference in missions are also potential risks.	Local staff detained on suspicion of bias. Interference during field missions by armed groups.	3
<b>Shootings and Crossfire</b>	Despite the ceasefire, sporadic violence in contested areas remains a concern. Crossfire incidents pose risks to staff during field missions or operations near sensitive zones. Accidental shootings during protests or confrontations may also occur.	Aid workers caught in clashes during protests. Crossfire incidents near the Netzarim Corridor.	4





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Threat	Description	Examples	Risk Level
<b>Theft, Armed Robbery, and Vehicle Hijacking</b>	Economic desperation increases the risk of theft, armed robbery, and vehicle hijackings targeting humanitarian staff and assets. Aid vehicles, warehouses, and convoys are particularly vulnerable, delaying aid delivery and increasing costs.	Break-ins at storage facilities containing medical supplies. Aid vehicle hijacked near Rafah Crossing.	4
<b>Civil Unrest and Community Disputes</b>	Overcrowding and competition for resources among displaced populations and host communities can lead to tensions and protests. Humanitarian actors may face hostility if delays or inequities in aid delivery are perceived. Protests near aid distribution points or offices can escalate quickly.	Riots at overcrowded distribution centres. Protests blaming INGOs for perceived favouritism.	4
<b>Land Rights and Property Disputes</b>	Disputes over property ownership, exacerbated by destroyed land records, could entangle humanitarian shelter and reconstruction programs. Criminal actors may exploit these disputes, leading to tensions or threats against staff.	Families disputing ownership of rebuilt homes. Criminal groups pressuring INGOs involved in reconstruction projects.	3
<b>Local Governance Challenges</b>	Limited capacity and inefficiency within local governance structures hinder security and operational access. Corruption and mismanagement exacerbate public resentment, causing delays or interference in humanitarian operations.	Delayed permits for aid delivery. Bribery demands at checkpoints.	4
<b>Humanitarian and Economic Risks</b>	Dependency on aid, combined with poverty and unemployment, creates a volatile environment. Delays in aid delivery may result in protests or opportunistic crimes targeting humanitarian workers and resources. Reconstruction delays add to tensions.	Looting during fuel or food shortages. Increased theft at aid warehouses during reconstruction.	5
<b>Access Restrictions and Blockades</b>	Political disputes and security concerns may restrict access to key areas. Delays at crossings (e.g., Kerem Shalom, Rafah) and harassment at checkpoints impact aid delivery and staff movement.	Delays in crossing permits for medical evacuations. Checkpoint harassment causing distribution delays.	3
<b>Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), UXOs, and Landmines</b>	Humanitarian staff face significant risks from unexploded ordnance and landmines in heavily bombed areas. These hazards complicate field assessments, aid delivery, and reconstruction efforts, requiring coordinated demining operations.	ERW-related injuries during infrastructure assessments. Delays in rebuilding due to UXO clearance operations.	5

### Takeaways

The post-ceasefire environment in Gaza presents a complex array of challenges that require strategic planning to ensure humanitarian operations are effective and equitable. Access constraints at key crossings, including Kerem Shalom and Rafah, are anticipated to cause delays in the delivery of critical aid supplies such as food, medicine, and fuel. These challenges, compounded by bureaucratic hurdles in permit processing, may disrupt the timely evacuation of medical patients and the movement of humanitarian workers. Additionally, the diversion of aid materials, particularly high-value resources like construction supplies and fuel, remains a pressing concern, necessitating robust tracking and oversight mechanisms.

Operational risks are further heightened by community frustrations, which could escalate into hostility toward aid workers if distributions are perceived as inequitable or delayed. Criminal exploitation of aid deliveries, including theft and extortion targeting convoys and warehouses, is likely to intensify given the strained economic conditions in the region. Reconstruction efforts face additional hurdles due to the widespread presence of UXOs and landmines, requiring coordinated demining initiatives to ensure the safety of field teams and local populations. As Gaza transitions to long-term recovery, the persistence of these challenges underscores the need for sustained advocacy, efficient resource allocation, and proactive engagement with affected communities to mitigate risks and foster stability.