

Israel formally adopts plan to occupy all of Gaza

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8 August 2025

Israel's national security cabinet approved a plan Friday to take over Gaza City, effectively occupying the entirety of Gaza in preparation for its annexation by Israel.

"We are erasing the Palestinian state," said Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich on Friday in response to the decision. "First in action and then officially."

The cabinet approved a series of war goals, including ensuring that neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority would govern Gaza. The plan declared the "establishment of an alternative civil administration."

On Thursday, Netanyahu was asked in an interview on Fox News whether Israel would take over all of Gaza. "We intend to," he replied.

Commenting on the significance of the move, the *Financial Times* wrote that the measure "paves the way for Israel to take over the Palestinian enclave for the second time since the 1967 war, leaving the nation in effective control of all the territories between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea."

The total occupation of Gaza is the military prerequisite for the US-Israeli plan to transfer the entire population of Gaza to concentration camps in preparation for their forcible displacement to other countries.

In February, Trump declared, "The US will take over the Gaza Strip," "level it out," and disperse the Palestinian population of Gaza to "other countries."

In May, Israeli Finance Minister Smotrich declared, "Within a year ... Gaza will be entirely destroyed, civilians will be sent to ... the south to a humanitarian zone ... and from there they will start to leave in great numbers to third countries."

On Friday, Trump said that the US is "working" on a proposal to remove the Palestinian people to Somaliland. Trump was asked by a reporter, "You

spoke of resettling the Gazans. The country of Somaliland has expressed potential interest if you were to recognize their independence."

Trump replied, "We're looking into that right now. ... We're working on that right now."

Earlier this week, the *Financial Times* reported that consultants from the Boston Consulting Group, a major US corporate consulting group, had worked on models for relocating the Palestinian people to Somalia and Somaliland, in a proposal first raised by the Trump administration earlier this year. The FT reported, "Multiple potential destinations were listed in a complex spreadsheet created on behalf of Israeli businesspeople who were sketching plans for the redevelopment of Gaza after the war between Hamas and Israel."

Gaza City, in the enclave's north, currently contains approximately 1 million people, most of whom have already been displaced multiple times in the course of the 22-month war. Before the genocide, it already had a higher population density than New York City, and its population has only swelled as people fled there from other parts of the country.

Gaza's approximately 2 million remaining residents have been forcibly displaced many times and are largely living in tents and in destroyed buildings. According to statistics from Gaza's government health ministry, 61,000 people have been killed since the start of the genocide.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the plan to occupy Gaza City, calling it "a dangerous escalation." He said it "will result in additional forced displacement, killings and massive destruction, compounding the unimaginable suffering of the Palestinian population in Gaza." The occupation of the city was scheduled to be completed by October 7.

In a statement, Amnesty International Secretary-General Agnes Callamard said the plan to occupy Gaza City was “utterly outrageous and revolting,” adding, “Nothing can justify the additional mass atrocities that an expanded military operation in Gaza City will entail.”

She concluded:

Just as we thought we had already seen the cruelest, most painful chapters of this genocide unfold—through Israel’s continued and escalating use of starvation as a method of warfare—plans to escalate the military operations in Gaza City indicate that indeed the worst is yet to come.

Michael Lynk, a former UN special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, told Al Jazeera:

You know and I know over the last six months, we’ve heard a constant refrain coming both from the United States and from Israel with respect to wanting to see the Palestinian population in Gaza either “thinned out”... or perhaps removed altogether. All of that would be certainly a war crime, quite likely also a crime against humanity. And if it’s part of a larger aim to try to destroy a people, in whole or in part, then it’s also genocide.

In a separate statement, UN Human Rights chief Volker Turk said the occupation of Gaza City “runs contrary to the ruling of the International Court of Justice that Israel must bring its occupation to an end as soon as possible, to the realization of the agreed two-state solution and to the right of Palestinians to self-determination.”

In a statement published July 29, the UN-backed Integrated Food Security Phase Classification warned, “The worst-case scenario of famine is currently playing out in the Gaza Strip.”

It added:

Mounting evidence shows that widespread starvation, malnutrition, and disease are driving a rise in hunger-related deaths. Latest data indicates that famine thresholds have been reached for food consumption in most of the Gaza Strip and for acute malnutrition in Gaza City.



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