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After Trump leaves Middle East

Israel launches “concluding” Gaza offensive, US plans displacement of Palestinians to Libya, Syria



Israeli soldiers work on tanks at a staging area near the border with the Gaza Strip, in southern Israel, Sunday, May 18, 2025. [AP Photo/Ariel Schalit]

After the trip by US President Donald Trump to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar last week, Israel has launched what it calls the “concluding” conquest of Gaza amid far-advanced US planning for the forcible resettlement of the Palestinian people outside their historic homeland.

While coverage of the ongoing US-Israeli starvation and massacres of the Palestinians has dropped from headlines in the media, countless front-page articles played up Trump’s “snub” of Benjamin Netanyahu by not visiting Israel amid “tensions” between the two governments. This created the political space for the *Washington Post* Editorial Board—in one example of many—to hail Trump’s trip as full of “wins” based on his “unorthodox” diplomacy.

The *Post* praised his “laudable” normalization of ties with the Al-Qaeda-linked government of Syria and his “good progress” throughout the region.

A major aim of the trip, however, was to lay the diplomatic groundwork for what the Netanyahu government has called its “concluding moves” in Gaza: the total military occupation of the enclave, the internal displacement of its population into armed-guarded concentration camps and the forced removal of Palestinians from Gaza.

On May 5, Netanyahu announced “Operation Gideon’s Chariots,” set to begin after Trump’s departure from the Middle East. On Sunday, the Israeli military declared the full-scale launch of the operation, involving major new ground offensives in northern Gaza, mass bombardments and additional displacement orders. A staggering 144 people were killed in Israeli airstrikes on Sunday alone.

Among those reportedly killed over the past week was Hamas leader Mohammed Sinwar, the brother of Yahya Sinwar, who was murdered by Israel in October. The killing of Mohammed Sinwar has been reported by multiple news publications but has not yet been confirmed.

The content of “Operation Gideon’s Chariots” was spelled out on May 6 by Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who 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.

The launch of the operation was accompanied by ecstatic proclamations from the Israeli government, dutifully echoed by the stenographers in the US media, that “even at this very moment, the negotiation team in Doha is working to exhaust every possibility for a deal” to end the war. But the Netanyahu government made clear that this “deal” would require “the exile of Hamas terrorists and the disarmament of the Gaza Strip”—in other words, that the Hamas negotiators would be signing their own death warrants.

Early Friday evening, in a classic “Friday night news dump” that received no coverage from other major news outlets, NBC published an article titled, “Trump administration working on plan to move 1 million Palestinians to Libya.”

The article revealed that while Trump was in the Middle East, his administration was in advanced negotiations with Libya and Syria, two countries whose governments were overturned by US-sponsored Islamist insurgencies.

The broadcaster reported:

The Trump administration is working on a plan to permanently relocate up to 1 million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Libya, five people with knowledge of the effort told NBC

News. ... Syria, with its new leadership following the ouster of Bashar al-Assad in December, is also under discussion as a possible location for resettling Palestinians currently in Gaza.

NBC reported that

in exchange for the resettling of Palestinians, the administration would potentially release billions of dollars of funds that the US froze more than a decade ago to Libya.

The article goes into horrific detail about the scale of the US ethnic cleansing plans, which are unlike anything undertaken by any imperialist power since the Holocaust. NBC wrote that “administration officials are looking at options for housing them [the Palestinians] and every potential method for transporting them from Gaza to Libya—by air, land, and sea—is being considered.”

It added:

Up to 2,000 people can fit on the top-end versions of some of the ferries the US used to transport civilians along the Mediterranean Sea to escape Libya’s civil war in 2011. If those vessels were to be used—and assuming that they didn’t need to refuel and weather conditions were good—it would take hundreds of trips lasting more than a day each way for up to 1 million people to travel from Gaza to Benghazi.

The article makes clear that Trump’s repeated plans to ethnically cleanse and annex Gaza, despite being dismissed as flights of fancy by the US media, are being taken with utmost seriousness by the administration. “The plan under discussion is part of President Donald Trump’s vision for a postwar Gaza,” NBC reported.

On February 5, in a White House news conference with Netanyahu, Trump declared, “The US will take over the Gaza Strip, and we will do a job with it too. ... We’re going to take over that piece ... we’re going to develop it.” Four days later, on February 9, he clarified, “But we’re committed to owning it, taking it.” On February 11, at a news conference with Jordan’s King Abdullah II, “We’re not going to buy anything. We’re going to have it [Gaza], and we’re going to keep it.”

A key transition to the implementation of this plan appears to be a US-Israeli scheme to fully take over the provision of food supplies in Gaza, administered by the US-based “Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.”

Over the weekend, Israel Army Radio quoted Defense Minister Israel Katz as saying that the “foundation” would “start distributing humanitarian aid on May 24.”

The “humanitarian” operation has been condemned by the United Nations as a fig leaf for the total occupation of the Gaza Strip. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told an Arab League summit over the weekend in Iraq:

I emphasize the UN will not participate in any so-called aid operation that does not adhere to international law and humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, and neutrality.

This is the meaning of the announcement Sunday by the office of Netanyahu that Israel will “introduce a basic amount of food to the population.” This announcement, presented by the US media as a “breakthrough” due to US “pressure” is, in fact, a central component of the US-Israeli plan to militarily occupy the Gaza Strip as part of the ethnic cleansing campaign.

On Sunday, the death toll of the Gaza genocide reached 53,339, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry. Since March 2, no food, water or electricity has entered Gaza, leading to a surge in malnutrition.

Last week, the UN-backed Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) warned that the entire population of Gaza is at “critical risk of famine.” The report found that 244,000 people in Gaza are already facing a food “catastrophe,” the worst classification for mass starvation. This is an 85 percent increase over the IPC’s earlier report in October 2024.

Over the weekend, the United Nations announced that 300 employees of its UNRWA aid agency had been killed by Israeli forces in a “gruesome milestone.” UN humanitarian chief Philippe Lazzarini wrote in a post on Twitter that the vast majority of staff were killed by the Israeli Army with their children and loved ones: whole families wiped out. ... Those killed were mostly UN health workers and teachers.

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