



By: TA | AP Insight

# Will Trump use the Gaza deal to reset relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors?



President Donald Trump is setting off for Israel and Egypt on Sunday to celebrate the U.S.-brokered **ceasefire** and hostage deal between Israel and Hamas and urge Middle East allies to seize the opportunity to build a **durable** peace in the volatile region.

It's a fragile moment with Israel and Hamas only in the early stages of implementing the first **phase** of the Trump agreement designed to bring a permanent end to the war sparked by the Oct. 7, 2023, **attack** on Israel by Hamas-led militants.

Trump thinks there is a narrow window to reshape the Mideast and reset long-fraught relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

It is a moment, the Republican president says, that has been helped along by his administration's support of Israel's decimation of Iranian proxies, including Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The White House says momentum is also building because Arab and Muslim states are demonstrating a renewed **focus** on resolving the broader, decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, in some cases, deepening relations with the United States

"I think you are going to have tremendous success and Gaza is going to be rebuilt," Trump said Friday. "And you have some very wealthy countries, as you know, over there. It would take a small fraction of their wealth to do that. And I think they want to do it."

## A tenuous point in the agreement

The first phase of the ceasefire agreement calls for the release of the final 48 hostages held by Hamas, including about 20 believed to be alive; the **release** of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel; a surge of humanitarian aid to Gaza; and a partial pullback by Israeli forces from Gaza's main cities.

Israeli troops on Friday finished withdrawing from parts of Gaza, triggering a 72-hour countdown under the deal for Hamas to release the Israeli hostages, potentially while Trump is on the ground there. He said he expected their return to be completed on Monday or Tuesday.

Trump will visit Israel first to meet with hostage families and address the Knesset, or parliament, an honor last extended to President George W. Bush during a visit in 2008. Vice President JD Vance on Sunday said Trump also was likely to meet with newly freed hostages, too.

"Knock on wood, but we feel very confident the hostages will be released and this president is actually traveling to the Middle East, likely this evening, in order to meet them and greet them in person," Vance told CBS' "Face the Nation."

Trump then stops in Egypt, where he and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi will lead a summit in Sharm el-Sheikh with leaders from more than 20 countries on peace in Gaza and the broader Middle East.

It is a tenuous truce and it is unclear whether the sides have reached any agreement on Gaza's postwar **governance**, the territory's reconstruction and Israel's demand that Hamas disarm.

Negotiations over those issues could break down, and Israel has hinted it may resume military operations if its demands are not met.

"I think the chances of (Hamas) disarming themselves, you know, are pretty close to zero," H.R. McMaster, a national security adviser during Trump's first term, said at an event hosted by the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies on Thursday. He said he thought what probably would happen in the coming months is that the Israeli military "is going to have to destroy them."

Israel continues to **rule** over millions of Palestinians without basic rights as settlements **expand** rapidly across the

occupied West Bank.



*Hamas agreed to the deal only when it felt that the sword was on its neck — and it is still on its neck - Benjamin Netanyahu*

Despite growing international recognition, Palestinian **statehood** appears exceedingly remote because of Israel's opposition and actions on the ground.

The war has left Israel isolated internationally and facing **allegations** of genocide, which it denies.

International arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defense minister are in effect, and the United Nations' highest court is considering allegations of genocide brought by South Africa.

Hamas has been militarily decimated and has given up its only bargaining chip with Israel by releasing the hostages.

But the Islamic militant group is still intact and could eventually **rebuild** if there's an extended period of calm.

Netanyahu reiterated that Israel would continue with its demilitarization of Hamas after the hostages are returned.

"Hamas agreed to the deal only when it felt that the sword was on its neck — and it is still on its neck," Netanyahu said Friday as Israel began to pull back its troops.

## Trump wants to expand the Abraham Accords

Much of Gaza has been **reduced** to rubble and rebuilding is expected to take years. The territory's roughly 2 million residents continue to struggle in desperate conditions.

Under the deal, Israel agreed to reopen five border crossings, which will help ease the flow of food and other supplies into Gaza, parts of which are experiencing famine.

Trump is also standing up a U.S.-led civil-military coordination center in Israel to help facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid as well as logistical and security assistance into Gaza.

**Trump is looking to quickly return attention to building on a first-term effort known as the Abraham Accords**

Roughly 200 U.S. troops will help support and **monitor** the ceasefire deal as part of a team that includes partner nations, nongovernmental organizations and private-sector players. U.S. troops will not be sent to Gaza, Adm. Brad Cooper, the U.S. military commander for the region, said in a social media post Saturday.

The White House has signaled that Trump is looking to quickly return attention to building on a first-term effort known as the Abraham Accords, which forged diplomatic and commercial ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco.

A permanent agreement in Gaza would help pave the path for Trump to begin talks with Saudi Arabia as well Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country, toward normalizing ties with Israel, according to a senior Trump administration official who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity.

Such a deal with Saudi Arabia, the most powerful and wealthy Arab state, has the potential to reshape the region and boost

Israel's standing in historic ways.

But brokering such an agreement remains a heavy lift as the kingdom has said it won't officially recognize Israel before a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.