



By: TA | AP Brief

EU is seeking a more active role in Gaza



European Union leaders are seeking a more active role in Gaza and the occupied West Bank after being sidelined from the U.S.-brokered **ceasefire** between Israel and Hamas.

At a summit in Brussels largely focused on Ukraine and Russia, EU heads of state discussed the shaky ceasefire in Gaza and pledged EU support for stability in the war-torn coastal enclave.

The EU has been the biggest provider of aid to the Palestinians and is Israel's top trading partner.

"It is important that Europe not only watches but plays an active role," said Luc Frieden, the prime minister of Luxembourg, as he headed into the meeting. "Gaza is not over; peace is not yet permanent," he said.

Outrage over the **war in Gaza** has riven the 27-nation bloc and pushed relations between Israel and the EU to a historic low.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced in September plans to seek **sanctions** and a partial trade suspension against Israel, aimed to pressure it to reach a peace deal in Gaza.

Momentum driving the measures seemed to falter with the ceasefire deal mediated by U.S. President Donald Trump, with some European leaders calling for them to be scrapped.

But leaders from Ireland to the Netherlands say that with violence continuing to flare up in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, keeping on the table sanctions of Israeli cabinet ministers and settlements and the partial suspension of a trade deal gives the EU leverage on Israel to curtail military action.

In the run-up to the ceasefire, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said earlier this month that "Europe has essentially become irrelevant and displayed enormous weakness."

The ceasefire deal

The ceasefire deal came about with no visible input from the EU, and European leaders have since scrambled to join the diplomacy effort currently reshaping Gaza.

The EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, has said the EU should play a role in Gaza and not just pay to support stability and eventually reconstruction.

The EU has provided key support for the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the occupied West Bank.

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At the summit's conclusion, EU leaders issued a pledge to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza, potentially via a maritime route from Cyprus.

They also suggested that a West Bank police support program could be extended to Gaza to bolster the stabilization force called for in the current 20-point ceasefire plan.

The EU has sought membership in the plan's "Board of Peace" transitional oversight body, Dubravka Šuica, European Commissioner for the Mediterranean, said this week.

At least two EU countries, Denmark and Germany, are participating in the new US-led stabilization effort overseeing and implementing the Gaza ceasefire. Flags of those two nations have been raised at the Civil-Military Coordination Center in southern Israel.

The European Border Assistance Mission in Rafah, on the Gaza-Egypt border, began in 2005. In January, it deployed 20 security border police experts from Italy, Spain and France.

During the February-March ceasefire, the mission helped 4,176 individuals leave the Gaza Strip, including 1,683 medical patients.

Those efforts were paused when fighting resumed. Outside of the EU, individual nations have acted to pressure Israel on their own as protests have rocked cities from Barcelona to Oslo.

Many have recognized a Palestinian state. Spain has ratcheted up its opposition to Israel's actions in Gaza. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez called the war a “**genocide**” when he announced in September plans to formalize an arms embargo and block Israel-bound fuel deliveries from passing through Spanish ports.

In August, Slovenia issued an **arms embargo** in what it said was a first for a EU member country.

Some national broadcasters have sought to exclude Israel from the **Eurovision Song Contest**. Member broadcasters will vote in November on whether Israel can participate in the musical extravaganza next year, as calls have mounted for the country to be excluded over the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.