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## **Trump's Gaza Plan: A Dangerous Provocation**

*By Hanan Sahmoud*

### **SYNOPSIS**

*Donald Trump's proposal to turn Gaza into a new "Riviera of the Middle East" by forcibly displacing indigenous Palestinians violates international law and mirrors failed Western tactics. The enduring trauma of the 1948 Nakba (Arabic for "catastrophe") when the State of Israel was proclaimed by David Ben-Gurion, remains undiminished. The current ceasefire must lead to recognition and implementation of practical and realistic measures to achieve justice for Palestinians.*

### **COMMENTARY**

Donald Trump's plan to "take over, own, and develop" Gaza not only disregards Palestinian sovereignty but also echoes historical projects that sought to erase and replace indigenous populations. Coming after the systematic physical destruction of Gaza and the deaths of so many civilians there, this proposal must be seen for what it is: a desperate continuation of failed policies that have only deepened Palestinian suffering and resistance.

The proposal is particularly alarming given the broader geopolitical context. It represents an extension of Trump's previous policies that overwhelmingly favoured Israeli colonial expansionism while ignoring Palestinian rights. His previous administration's decisions, such as recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital and endorsing illegal settlement expansion, demonstrated a clear intent to undermine any path toward a just resolution for Palestinians. By presenting this latest plan as a development opportunity, Trump is employing a well-worn colonial tactic: exploiting "development" language to mask the reality of forced displacement and ethnic cleansing.

## **A Historical Perspective: The Nakba and the Never-Ending Displacement**

The global response to Trump's plan must be resolute and forceful, especially in light of the collective trauma of the Nakba (catastrophe) in 1948, when over 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced to make way for the state of Israel. This mass expulsion inflicted wounds that remain unhealed, as millions of Palestinians continue to live as refugees in camps across the Arab world and beyond, still waiting for their right to return to be realised.

For decades, they have endured relentless efforts to erase the Palestinian existence. The recent genocide in Gaza is yet another chapter in this long-standing campaign of ethnic cleansing. Now, with Trump's proposal, Palestinians are once again being treated not as a people with inalienable rights to their ancestral land and dignity but as obstacles to be removed.

The expulsion of Palestinians is not a relic of 1948; it has continued through decades of Israeli policies, from military occupation and the expansion of settlements to the ongoing blockade of Gaza. The 1967 war marked yet another wave of displacement, and since then, Israel has implemented policies designed to make life unbearable for Palestinians. Forced evictions in East Jerusalem, the destruction of Palestinian homes, and the systemic denial of basic rights are all part of an ongoing strategy of Zionist domination in the interest of the Jewish nation state. Trump's proposal fits seamlessly into this broader pattern, offering yet another tool for the further erasure of Palestinians from their land.

### **Colonial Tactics Repackaged**

Trump's Gaza proposal is not a novel idea. The British Mandate era witnessed similar rhetoric, where Palestinian land was promised to outsiders while indigenous rights were systematically undermined. More recently, Israeli leaders have floated ideas of transferring Palestinians to the Sinai or Jordan – attempts that have consistently failed due to Palestinian resistance and international condemnation.

The narrative remains the same: the indigenous population is deemed unworthy of self-rule, and their land is framed as a blank slate for external exploitation. Trump's proposal follows this logic, ignoring Palestinian agency and treating Gaza as a real estate opportunity rather than a homeland for millions who have endured decades of displacement and siege.

The belief that Palestinians can simply be removed and replaced is rooted in a racist and indefensible colonial mindset.

### **The Arab World's Perspective: Rage and Reaffirmation of Solidarity**

The Arab world's response to Trump's proposal is one of outrage, further fuelling long-standing anger over western complicity in Palestinian dispossession. Even governments that have normalised ties with Israel under US pressure may find themselves forced to publicly reject this latest attempt at forced displacement.

The memory of the Nakba remains deeply embedded in Arab consciousness, and

Trump's proposal may serve to reinvigorate grassroots movements across the region, pushing Arab leaders to take a stronger stance in defence of Palestinian rights.

Public sentiment across the Middle East has consistently rejected normalisation efforts that ignore Palestinian sovereignty. The 2020 Abraham Accords, which saw some Arab states establish diplomatic ties with Israel, faced widespread criticism from their own populations.

Trump's latest plan risks further destabilising the region by reigniting protests and reinforcing the perception that Western powers prioritise Israeli interests at the expense of Palestinian lives. The deep-seated resentment stemming from colonial history means that any attempt to forcibly reshape Gaza will be met with resistance not just from Palestinians, but from millions across the Arab world.

### **The Need for a Serious Global Response**

More than ever, the world must take the Palestinian issue strategically and tactically, to reach an enduring outcome. Efforts to displace Palestinians have failed, yet leaders like Trump continue to propose the same strategies that have already been met with steadfast Palestinian resistance. The international community cannot afford to ignore this latest threat, nor can it continue to treat the Palestinian struggle as an afterthought in global politics.

Global institutions, including the United Nations, must take a decisive stand against any proposal that seeks to displace Palestinians under the pretext of rebuilding and development. To prevent ethnic cleansing, the international community must employ tangible measures such as sanctions, diplomatic pressure, and legal accountability. Additionally, civil society movements, particularly the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, have been instrumental in challenging Israeli policies. Their efforts must be strengthened and supported on a broader scale to ensure meaningful resistance against systematic oppression.

### **A Warning Against Repeating History**

Trump's plan is a dangerous provocation that threatens to increase tensions in an already volatile region. The world has seen these tactics before, and they have failed every time. Instead, the global community must advocate for justice, accountability, and self-determination for Palestinians. The time for empty rhetoric is over; the world must act to ensure that history does not repeat itself.

The continued resistance of the Palestinian people serves as a reminder that imposed solutions will never succeed. The global community must learn from history and work towards genuine justice, rather than supporting schemes that perpetuate oppression. Only by addressing the root causes of Palestinian dispossession and upholding international law can there be any hope for a just and lasting resolution.

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