



[Serious Questions Remain Over the Long-Term Viability of the Gaza Ceasefire Agreement Following the Exchange of Prisoners and the Summit in Sharm El Sheikh](#)

Under the terms of the recently initiated Gaza ceasefire deal, a prisoner exchange was carried out between Israel and Hamas at the beginning of this week which saw the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinians detained in Israeli jails and the remaining 20 living Israeli hostages held in Gaza. Amid the exchange, U.S. President Donald Trump traveled to Israel to address the Knesset before then heading to Egypt to co-chair an international summit in Sharm El Sheikh aimed at rallying support behind the Gaza ceasefire agreement. Dozens of world leaders were present at the summit, but notably, this did not include Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – as a last-minute attempt by Trump to invite Netanyahu was scratched after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that he would pull out of the conference unless Netanyahu’s attendance was ruled out. During indications of Netanyahu’s potential inclusion, several of the visiting delegations expressed that they would not attend as well and only ultimately reversed course when Netanyahu’s office confirmed his non-attendance. For many observers, this serves to demonstrate the immense degree of global outrage and isolation directed towards the Netanyahu government for its war crimes, human rights abuses, and unlawful actions in Gaza.

The Sharm El Sheikh summit was a means to try and formalize the Gaza ceasefire agreement, however serious questions remain regarding its long-term viability due to the manner in which the deal came to be finalized. Commentators have outlined how Trump pushed Netanyahu to accept the deal, with the momentum for it built largely on the back of universal denunciation – including from President Trump himself – regarding Israel’s abhorrent and reckless attack on Qatar – one of the key mediating forces in the region – in early September. This was on full display during the meeting between Trump and Arab and Muslim leaders on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, whereby regional officials voiced their collective outrage at the lawless Israeli attack and the devastating toll that Israel’s war on Gaza was having on the territory’s civilian population. Experts contend that the meeting was the key factor in prompting Trump and those in his administration to pressure Netanyahu into accepting a new Gaza deal. The agreement, and Qatar’s major role in bringing it to fruition, has bolstered the Gulf country’s image as a regional peacemaker.

The fact that the agreement was essentially forced onto the Netanyahu government has understandably raised doubts as to Israel’s commitment to abide by the deal, and it has already taken actions which highlight this concern. In violation of the initiated Gaza ceasefire deal, Israel has kept the Rafah border crossing closed to the delivery of humanitarian aid and cut the number of daily aid trucks allowed into Gaza to half of the agreed-upon total. In doing so, it cited delays in Hamas’ release of the remains of deceased hostages despite humanitarian groups such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who are overseeing this process confirming that this is because of the extensive destruction in Gaza which has made these difficult to locate. Even multiple Trump administration advisers have relayed their agreement and acknowledgement of this over the preceding days. On top of all of this, Israel’s blocking of the fuel, bulldozers, and cranes required to dig through the rubble has caused and exacerbated this issue in the first place. Furthermore, Israel has engaged in repeated violations of the ceasefire, as it has continued to carry out bombings which have killed and injured civilians in recent days. At least 23 Palestinians have been killed and a further 122 wounded by Israeli attacks in Gaza since Saturday – the first full day of the ceasefire being in effect.

Analysts note that diplomatic efforts have been devoted to the more straightforward tasks of securing a cessation of large-scale military hostilities and a prisoner exchange. Now that these have been achieved, the challenging question of what comes next lingers. The Gaza deal was focused primarily on these immediate goals, with its lack of clarity and vagueness leaving a lot of critical details as to long-term issues to be worked out later on. Additionally, Hamas delayed acceptance of the agreement until Trump gave personal guarantees that he would not allow Israel to abandon the deal and resume the war – given that there was a concern that Israel would only temporarily halt its military offensive to secure the release of hostages and then restart this thereafter. In fact, this was such a major sticking point that reports indicate an unprecedented direct meeting between Trump envoy Steve Witkoff, his son-in-law Jared Kushner, and Hamas officials is what ultimately helped get the Gaza deal across the line – with Witkoff and Kushner providing Hamas with the guarantees on behalf of Trump. In the end, it was the willingness of Witkoff and Kushner to meet with Hamas leaders, despite the political risks involved, which convinced the group that the U.S. was serious about securing and enforcing a deal.

Some of the main issues whose details have yet to be ironed out include the transitional and future governance of Gaza, reconstruction and peacekeeping efforts, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, the disarmament of Hamas, and the prospect of Palestinian statehood – many of which are elements that are viewed as essential for long-term peace and stability in the region. Following the recent summit in Sharm El Sheikh, no public timeline has been laid out for negotiations regarding the next phases of the Gaza deal. For this reason, the international summit was criticized by some for producing little substantive details beyond mere symbolic gestures. Rather than serving as a forum for outlining details regarding the needed next steps in Gaza, the summit functioned more like a premature celebration which failed to try and tackle the significant obstacles that lie ahead. While the first phase bringing about a new ceasefire and prisoner exchange was implemented, the subsequent phases are more complex and lack a clear schedule.

An underlying aspect that is evident which is driving much of the focus being placed on immediate “wins” as opposed to the necessary long-term considerations is President Trump’s desire to be viewed as a peacemaker. To many observers, it is apparent that Trump is fixating on short-term gains that he can easily try to sell as significant achievements, while setting aside the far more vital long-term issues that will actually determine the ultimate success – or lack thereof – of the Gaza deal. Simply put, for Trump and his ambitions to win a future Nobel Peace Prize – something that he has made no secret of – it is a lot more convenient to draw attention to halting hostilities between Israel and Hamas than the extremely challenging and difficult diplomatic work ahead to turn this into real concrete progress and sustainable peace.

While much that is needed to be done moving forward remains vague and still yet to be determined, one of the tangible diplomatic initiatives to address the situation in Gaza involves Egypt’s plan to host a conference next month in November to raise funds for the reconstruction of the besieged Palestinian territory. Egypt is slated to hold this in an attempt to coordinate international rebuilding and secure financial support from an array of countries. This includes several in the Gulf and East Asia such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea. The conference aims to bring together representatives from dozens of nations, international organizations, private companies, and financial institutions in order to help align these efforts.