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PALESTINE ECONOMIC POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE (MAS)

Background Paper

Round Table (6)



Postwar Gaza: Perspectives and a Comparative Analysis of Recovery and Reconstruction Plans and Political Scenarios¹

August 2026

¹ This paper draws on a range of international and local sources, as well as prior studies conducted by the MAS Institute, particularly those addressing reconstruction planning frameworks. It also builds on earlier discussions and reconstruction papers presented in specialized forums and roundtables. In addition, the paper offers an analytical perspective and provides insights into the political scenarios that may shape the reconstruction process.



MAS

**PALESTINE ECONOMIC POLICY
RESEARCH INSTITUTE (MAS)**

Tel No. +970 (2) 2987053/4

Fax No. +970 (2) 298055

info@mas.ps

ww.mas.ps

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Prepared by: Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS)

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Contents

1. Background and Political Context of Reconstruction and Recovery	01
2. Methodology for Analyzing and Comparing the Plans	02
3. Planning Initiatives: Chronological Overview of the Plans and Their Sponsors (See Matrix No. 1)	04
4. Key Approaches and Differences Among the Plans	06
5. Role of International Actors	08
6. General Comparative Matrix and Assessment of Plans	08
7. Relevant International Legal Framework⁶.	11
8. The Plans from the Perspective of International Law Principles	12
9. The Plans from the Perspective of Potential Political Scenarios	14
10. Recommendations	16
11. Conclusion and Summary	18
Appendices	20
Matrix No. (1): Plans, Authoring and Implementing Entities, and Evaluation Criteria	20
List of Sources/References	25

1. Background and Political Context of Reconstruction and Recovery

Since 2008, Gaza has endured a succession of wars and large-scale military assaults, in addition to intermittent military operations. The most significant of these occurred in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2021, and, most recently, following October 7, 2023. These wars caused widespread destruction to infrastructure and housing and altered Gaza's geographic and demographic landscape. As a result, reconstruction has become an urgent and recurring necessity requiring extensive, coordinated planning. The reconstruction of Gaza is therefore not a recent concern; its roots extend back nearly two decades before the latest war.

First introduced in 2005 by the U.S.-based RAND Corporation, the ARC plan (*Arc: A Genuine Opportunity for "Peace"*) centered on connecting the West Bank and Gaza through a land corridor supported by modern transportation and infrastructure networks, which would form the backbone of a future independent Palestinian state. However, the plan remained largely theoretical and was never implemented because of the continued Israeli occupation and the deepening internal Palestinian political divide.

The latest war on Gaza marked a critical political and security turning point in the perspectives of the international community and political decision-makers. This shift was reflected in intensified international and regional efforts to formulate visions, initiatives, and plans for the "day after" in Gaza. To date, however, these various plans remain pending, awaiting political consensus and the conditions necessary for implementation. The plans and initiatives differ considerably in their overall visions, depending on the entities that developed them. Some focus on infrastructure and economic growth; others link reconstruction to specific political or security arrangements or transitional governance models; while still others reduce the broader vision to a set of development projects without adequately addressing political and economic rights.

Despite the proliferation of plans for Gaza's reconstruction and the increased pace of planning efforts since the October 2023 war, these initiatives, shaped by the visions and political and economic interests of the parties behind them, have largely remained stalled. Following the ceasefire in January 2025, however, planning began to shift from broad visions toward more practical frameworks featuring clearer governance structures, defined financing models, implementation timelines, and specific political conditions. Even so, the plans remain fragmented and continue to reflect the objectives of their respective sponsors, while often overlooking the risks and implications they pose for Palestinian political and national rights. The political horizon therefore remains ambiguous, with no clearly defined direction or position.

While some of these plans are framed in humanitarian or development-oriented language, they often carry implicit, and at times explicit, visions of how life in Gaza should be reorganized: Who controls the territory? Who governs the population? What is rebuilt, how, and for whom? And what happens to displaced residents, and who has the right to return? In this context, infrastructure is not shaped by cement alone; it is also shaped by systems of control and governance that reflect power balances, funding conditions, and foreign intervention. Understanding these plans therefore requires a dual reading: a technical reading that examines implementation models and instruments, and an analytical reading that explores what lies behind the discourse, including the underlying power structures and contexts being reconstituted through "reconstruction" as a political, economic, and spatial process.

The general tendency of these plans is to focus on reconstruction while paying insufficient attention to economic recovery. Recovery is intended to restore essential services, begin revitalizing economic activity and the return to work, rehabilitate temporary housing until solving the displacement dilemma, and prioritize the most vulnerable groups. These measures do not generally fall within reconstruction programs designed as part of medium- and long-term development planning. Plans must therefore integrate recovery and reconstruction in a balanced manner.

Against this backdrop, there is a clear need for a critical paper that examines the substance and nature of these plans, the dimensions each seeks to advance, and the broader landscape and objectives of Gaza reconstruction proposals circulated during and after the current war. Through a comparative analysis, the paper highlights the fundamental differences among these plans and the visions they embody. It also traces the structural shifts in approaches to rebuilding Gaza over the past two decades. Since October 7, 2023, reconstruction has become far more complex than merely rebuilding structures. It has evolved into a multidimensional process in which political and economic considerations intersect with international law, requiring a comprehensive analytical and strategic approach.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to achieve the following principal objectives:

- Examine and assess the political dimensions of the various plans and determine the extent to which they respond to, align with, or conflict with Palestinian priorities and needs related to the use of Palestinian resources and economic and political rights and the relevant provisions of international law.
- Examine the Palestinian agency in planning, the extent of Palestinian representation in developing these plans, and whether Palestinians are assigned a meaningful role in their implementation.
- Support Palestinian and non-Palestinian decision-makers, researchers, and stakeholders in evaluating the plans according to clear criteria, including governance, financing, Palestinian representation, and implementation conditions.

Ultimately, by comparing the plans and identifying the concerns and shortcomings associated with each, this paper seeks to clarify their nature and implications. It also aims to build an informed understanding of how these plans may be addressed at the official level, whether through acceptance, rejection, or amendment. By encouraging broader discussion, the paper seeks to improve engagement with these proposals, clarify the positions and objectives of the various parties involved, identify the options that best serve Palestinian interests, and offer practical guidance and recommendations to decision-makers and professionals working on reconstruction.

2. Methodology for Analyzing and Comparing the Plans

To achieve the objectives of this paper, the plans will be compared against a set of political, economic, and social criteria, based on the following principles:

- Distinguishing between broad visions and specific projects or project packages, as well as between measures intended to support recovery and plans designed for reconstruction.
- Applying an analytical methodology based on a review of the original documents for each plan, together with relevant reports and studies issued by international, regional, and Palestinian

institutions. To enable a systematic comparison, an analytical framework was developed around nine principal dimensions:

1. The interests and legitimacy of the entity that developed the plan
 2. The proposed implementing actor or actors
 3. The extent and nature of Palestinian participation, and decision-making authority
 4. The proposed security models and governance arrangements
 5. The economic strategy and the financing model and controlling the resources.
 6. The plan's position on refugees and displaced persons and the right of return
 7. The envisaged political horizon and end-state vision including sovereignty, liberation, and the Palestinian national interest.
 8. The extent of coordination with Palestinian institutions
 9. The conditions and dependencies associated with implementation
- This framework enables a more consistent comparison among the various plans and supports an assessment of their overall direction and alignment with Palestinian national interests, while using relevant principles of international law as a general point of reference. Adopting clear criteria to ensure a balanced, comprehensive, and consistent assessment. The principal criteria are:
 1. The existence of a written document that can be consulted, whether a report, plan, framework, or published or widely circulated working paper
 2. The presentation of a vision directly related to Gaza's reconstruction, recovery, or postwar governance, rather than a general political position
 3. Issuance by an entity with the potential to influence the reconstruction process, such as an international institution, regional actor, Palestinian institution, coalition of experts, or influential private-sector body
 4. The inclusion of elements that can be analyzed across the nine dimensions outlined above
 - Treating the spatial and reconstruction dimensions as fundamental pillars that extend beyond technical and economic considerations. These dimensions also intersect with political, structural, and forward-looking questions concerning the future organization of life and governance in Gaza. The analysis therefore examines the extent to which each plan is consistent with sovereignty, liberation, and the Palestinian national interest.

Structure of the Paper

This paper consists of four main sections. The first provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of the broader context in which these plans emerged. It classifies them chronologically into three groups: plans issued before the latest war, plans developed during the war, and plans issued after the so-called ceasefire agreement of October 10, 2025. It also categorizes them according to the entities that prepared them: international, regional, Palestinian, and private-sector actors. The second section presents a comprehensive analytical matrix comparing the 14 plans against the criteria outlined above. The third examines the international legal framework relevant to reconstruction, including international humanitarian law, the right to self-determination, and accountability for international crimes. The report concludes with observations summarizing the principal potential scenarios and findings.

3. Planning Initiatives: Chronological Overview of the Plans and Their Sponsors (See Matrix No. 1)

This section will provide a broad assessment of the relative relevance of the different plans. Which plans carry the most weight and which appear to be the most likely or realistic plan.

Reconstruction plans can be classified into three main chronological groups based on when they were issued and the political contexts in which they emerged. The first group comprises plans issued before the latest war, specifically between 2005 and October 7, 2023. These include the RAND Corporation's *ARC* plan, which presented the first comprehensive vision for connecting Gaza and the West Bank within a Palestinian state, as well as other plans developed in subsequent periods in response to the recurring destruction caused by successive wars.

RAND's plans are characterized by their emphasis on spatial planning and long-term infrastructure development, with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state assumed as a prerequisite for implementation. The corporation presents an advanced technical and economic vision, but its plans often overlook immediate political and security complexities or address them only superficially.

The second group, which contains the largest number of plans, comprises those developed during the war between October 2023 and September 2025. It includes the *Interim Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment* (IRDNA), issued in February 2025 by the World Bank, the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN), which estimated physical damage at more than US\$18.5 billion. Furthermore, the interim assessment of April 2026 estimated recovery and reconstruction needs at USD 71.4 billion.

It also includes the Arab plan, *Gaza/Palestine: Early Recovery, Reconstruction and Development Plan*, launched by Egypt in March 2025 with the support of the League of Arab States. The plan presents a comprehensive regional vision for reconstruction in three phases, at an estimated total cost of approximately US\$53 billion.

During the same period, the RAND Corporation released *A Spatial Vision for Palestine* in March 2025, focusing on the comprehensive spatial replanning of Gaza. UN-Habitat also introduced its *Neighborhood-Based Recovery and Reconstruction Framework*, which adopts neighborhoods as the primary units for planning and implementation.

The second group is also distinguished by the emergence of independent Palestinian initiatives, most notably the Gaza Phoenix Initiative, launched in January 2024 by a coalition of Palestinian architects, planners, and researchers. The initiative explicitly rejects the "tabula rasa," or blank-slate, approach, which assumes that reconstruction must begin from scratch, as though the place had no history or context. Instead, it advances an alternative vision grounded in community participation, the preservation of urban memory, and the protection of Gaza's social and urban fabric.

Other notable contributions include the *Gaza 2050* plan, developed by the Palestinian private sector. It offers a comprehensive, long-term strategic vision aimed at transforming Gaza from an isolated and crisis-stricken territory into an economically and intellectually vibrant hub that is connected regionally and globally and integrated geographically and economically with the West Bank.

In addition, the *Palestine Emerging: Reconstruction and Economic Plan*, launched by a coalition of Palestinian business leaders in December 2024, focuses on revitalizing the health, education, and infrastructure sectors as key pillars of economic recovery and long-term development.

This group also includes regional proposals such as the *Gaza Investment Plan* developed by the UAE-based Al Habtoor Group. The plan proposed a public-private partnership model under which Palestinians would hold a 70% ownership stake in the proposed holding company.

In February 2025, another proposal emerged: *An Economic Plan for Rebuilding Gaza: A BOT Approach*, also known as *Gaza Riviera*. Prepared by Professor Joseph Pelzman of George Washington University with the support of U.S. President Donald Trump, the plan proposes a 50-year build-operate-transfer (BOT) model and envisions transforming Gaza into a high-end tourism and investment destination modeled after the Mediterranean Riviera.

The third group comprises plans that emerged after the ceasefire agreement was reached in October 2025. These plans are distinguished by their emphasis on transitional governance and practical implementation arrangements. The most prominent proposal in this group is the *Gaza International Transitional Authority* (GITA), developed by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change and unveiled in September 2025. It proposes establishing an international transitional authority mandated by the United Nations Security Council to administer Gaza during a 3-5-year transitional period. The plan sets out a complex governance structure that places political and legal decision-making in the hands of an international executive board while largely excluding any formal Palestinian role.

Direct U.S.-Israeli proposals constitute a distinct category. In 2025, amid the proliferation of reconstruction plans, the *Gaza Reconstitution, Economic Acceleration and Transformation Trust* (GREAT Trust), backed by the Trump administration, emerged and was presented and promoted by Jared Kushner at the 2025 World Economic Forum in Davos. The proposal advances a model of direct, U.S.-led international trusteeship over Gaza for a period of up to 50 years, supported by large-scale investments estimated at US\$70-100 billion from the public sector and US\$35-65 billion from the private sector.

By contrast, Palestinian efforts to shape future policies for Gaza have continued, with sustained work to develop appropriate plans that address Palestinian needs and reflect Palestinian perspectives. At the official level, the Ministry of Local Government and the Palestinian Ministry of Planning developed the *Palestinian National Spatial Plan* (PNSP), which affirms the political and geographic unity of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem and rejects any separatist models. In October 2025, the Palestinian government, through the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), launched the *Gaza Recovery, Reconstruction and Development Implementation Program* as an operational extension of the Arab plan. The program was estimated to cost a total of US\$67.1 billion and comprises 56 implementation programs over a five-year period. It represents the most comprehensive official Palestinian effort to translate regional visions into actionable plans under full Palestinian leadership, with clearly defined mechanisms for financing and coordination with international donors.

The Palestinian private sector also developed two principal plans: *Gaza 2050*, which envisions Gaza as an advanced technological hub, and the *Palestine Emerging: Reconstruction and Economic Plan* (PREP), which focuses on vital sectors such as health and education.

At the Arab regional level, the *Gaza/Palestine: Early Recovery, Reconstruction and Development Plan*, launched by Egypt in March 2025 with the support of the League of Arab States, stands out as a unified Arab effort to offer an alternative to Western proposals. The plan emphasizes a leadership role for the Palestinian Authority, categorically rejects any scenarios involving displacement or geographic separation, and reaffirms its commitment to the two-state solution.

It proposes a three-phase implementation mechanism: an early recovery phase lasting six months at a cost of US\$3 billion; a core reconstruction phase lasting two years for US\$20 billion; and a long-term development phase lasting two and a half years at US\$30 billion. Among other regional actors, the UAE-based Al Habtoor Group also presented its *Gaza Investment Plan*, which proposes an Arab-Palestinian-led public-private partnership model.

4. Key Approaches and Differences Among the Plans

The principal disagreement among these plans is not purely technical. At its core, it is political and concerns governance and sovereignty. The differences therefore center on several fundamental questions: Who sets the priorities? Who controls implementation? Who owns the reconstructed assets? And will reconstruction strengthen Palestinian sovereignty, rights, and national ownership, or undermine them?

Some plans treat Palestinians as aid recipients, a labor force, or beneficiaries within transitional international arrangements, while others grant them greater representation and participation in decision-making. Certain proposals also transfer decision-making authority to international actors, transitional bodies, or frameworks resembling international trusteeship. The assessment of any reconstruction plan should therefore extend beyond its technical quality or financial feasibility to include its implications for governance and its compatibility with Palestinian sovereignty and national rights.

Taken together, the 14 plans reflect five principal approaches that reveal fundamental differences in their underlying philosophies and objectives.

- The technical development approach focuses on infrastructure, spatial planning, and economic development without examining political or security arrangements in depth. The RAND, UN-Habitat, and *Gaza 2050* plans fall within this category. They assume a relatively stable political environment and concentrate on the technical dimensions of reconstruction. This approach is characterized by a high level of technical detail and a long-term vision, but it often overlooks the actual political and security obstacles that impede implementation.
- The political-security approach links reconstruction to specific political and security arrangements and regards a political settlement as a prerequisite for its success. The Arab plan and the Palestinian government's MoPIC plan fall within this category. Both emphasize a permanent ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces, the lifting of the blockade, and the return of the Palestinian Authority to administer Gaza as essential conditions. This approach is distinguished by its political realism and its linkage of reconstruction to national rights. However, it faces major challenges in the absence of genuine international willingness to compel Israel to meet these conditions.
- The investment-driven privatization approach relies primarily on the private sector and commercial investment while marginalizing the government's role or reducing it to a minimum.

The Trump-Pelzman *Gaza Riviera* plan, the Al Habtoor plan, and PREP fall within this category. They propose public-private partnership (PPP) models, build-operate-transfer (BOT) contracts, or direct management by private companies. This approach emphasizes economic efficiency and financial sustainability, but it raises serious concerns regarding national sovereignty, social justice, and property rights.

- The international transitional governance approach, the most controversial of the five, proposes placing Gaza under direct international administration for a transitional period that could extend for years or even decades. The GITA and GREAT Trust plans fall within this category. Both propose complex, internationally led governance structures in which the Palestinian role is limited to technical implementation under strict international supervision. This approach is justified on the grounds that international guarantees are needed to ensure the success of reconstruction and prevent renewed armed conflict. However, it faces broad Palestinian opposition because it infringes on national sovereignty and risks turning Gaza into a new form of colonial trusteeship.
- The participatory community-based approach places local communities at the center of reconstruction while emphasizing the preservation of cultural identity, urban memory, and the social fabric. The *Gaza Phoenix Initiative* clearly embodies this approach by rejecting the “blank slate” logic that treats destruction as an opportunity to erase the past and reshape Gaza according to external visions. This approach is characterized by cultural and social sensitivity and a commitment to democratic participation, but it faces major challenges in securing financing and competing with large-scale, internationally backed projects.

This approach (participatory community-based) is reflected in the *Palestinian National Spatial Plan* (PNSP) and the Ministry of Planning’s plan, which constitute a serious and comprehensive effort to reshape Palestinian geography as a means of advancing state-building and affirming sovereignty amid continued occupation and deep institutional and territorial fragmentation.

Developed by the National Urban Planning Agency in coordination with the relevant public institutions, the plan presents an integrated vision for connecting the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem within a single spatial framework. Its objective is to strengthen national unity and promote sustainable development.

The plan is structured around four interrelated strategic objectives:

- Strengthening national sovereignty and geographic unity: Reintegrating Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem within a unified spatial vision that challenges the geographic and political fragmentation imposed by the occupation.
- Promoting sustainability and resilience: Adopting sustainable development models that support the efficient use of resources, green growth, and a circular economy, particularly in the energy, water, and infrastructure sectors.
- Advancing participatory planning and local leadership: Applying an inclusive approach that ensures the participation of local communities, the private sector, and civil society in shaping spatial policies.
- Enhancing regional connectivity and integration: Positioning Palestine as part of a broader Levantine regional framework and overcoming isolation through improved domestic infrastructure and stronger regional linkages.

5. Role of International Actors

Addressing the role of international actors in Gaza within the limited scope of this paper is challenging, given the scale and complexity of the efforts undertaken. Regardless of the results achieved, and despite the obstruction of many initiatives by restrictive Israeli occupation policies that have impeded international efforts to assist Gaza, United Nations bodies, international institutions, regional organizations, and national governments have continued to provide support to the extent possible.

Without examining humanitarian assistance and grants, the focus here is on their role in developing and supporting plans for Gaza's recovery and reconstruction. The preliminary rapid damage and needs assessments prepared by international actors provide an essential knowledge base for planning and relief efforts over both the short and long term.

In this context, the World Bank, the EU, and the UN jointly prepared numerous studies, reports, and assessments. These are clear, technical documents that provide a detailed diagnosis of conditions in Gaza and serve as balanced and informative sources. Their principal value lies in establishing the knowledge and evidence base on which any planning for Gaza's reconstruction may rely. They should therefore be treated as important reference tools and, in some areas, may constitute the only available authoritative reference.

These studies also set out important principles and recommendations to guide reconstruction planning. For example, the joint EU and UN report 2022¹ reflects several principles grounded in Security Council resolutions:

"The European Union and the United Nations emphasize that recovery and reconstruction efforts must be Palestinian-led and should adopt 'build back better' and 'move forward better' approaches. These efforts should actively support the transfer of governance to the Palestinian Authority in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2803 and the Comprehensive Plan, while contributing to a lasting political settlement based on the two-state solution. Planning and implementation processes should also be inclusive, transparent, and accountable, with particular attention to the needs of women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities."²

International actors have also called for the adoption of various technical mechanisms, particularly in relation to financing, to ensure sound governance and strengthen coherence and coordination among existing international trust funds. In parallel, they have advocated the establishment of a dedicated Palestinian sovereign reconstruction fund to pool and allocate Palestinian financial resources earmarked for reconstruction. Work on these mechanisms remains ongoing, but Israeli policies continue to obstruct progress toward their practical implementation.

6. General Comparative Matrix and Assessment of Plans

This comparative assessment applies a consistent critical standard to all plans without exception, including Palestinian and national plans. Differences in authorship do not exempt any proposal from

1 Report of the Security Council (2022). General Assembly Official Records, 77 Session Supplement No. 2. New York 2023.

2 United Nations (2022). Report of the Security Council, General Assembly Official Records 77 Session Supplement No. 2: New York 2023.

scrutiny regarding governance, financing, feasibility, and implementation conditions. Accordingly, this review is not intended primarily to judge the legitimacy of a plan, but rather to examine its structure, the clarity of roles and responsibilities, the realism of its resources and funding sources, and the extent of Palestinian representation in decision-making.

The matrix (see Matrix No. 1 at the end of the paper) reveals significant differences in the plans' feasibility. Plans linked to clearly defined United Nations and regional frameworks appear more readily translatable, at least in part, into phased programs than plans that propose major structural transformations without clear governance mechanisms or identified actors capable of guaranteeing implementation.

Some proposals focus on restoring specific sectors or advancing early recovery through practical arrangements. Others remain conceptually unclear and fail to adequately answer fundamental questions: Who decides? Who provides the financing? Who implements the plan? And under what political and security conditions?

The plans may therefore be assessed across the following dimensions:

- **Economic and Investment Dimension and Associated Risks**

From a financing perspective, three broad approaches can be identified:

1. An approach that proposes financing packages within international or regional frameworks, but is often subject to political conditions.
2. An investment-driven or privatization approach that relies on instruments such as public-private partnerships or build-operate-transfer arrangements. Although this approach may appear attractive from a financing perspective, it increases the risk of constraining public decision-making and tying reconstruction to external investment interests.
3. A Palestinian or locally driven approach that prioritizes the restoration of services and social sectors, but faces practical challenges relating to freedom of movement, the reliability of financial flows, and the sustainability of implementation under postwar arrangements.

Although many plans present substantial financing figures and phased recovery schedules, the credibility of their financing does not depend solely on the scale of the announced commitments. It also depends on whether these commitments can be converted into actual financial flows within an unstable political and security environment. The principal risk lies in the extent to which financing is tied to political or security conditions that may delay disbursement.

More broadly, additional economic risks may emerge in the postwar period and should be considered when assessing the plans. The most significant are:

1. The risk of a rent-based reconstruction economy that prioritizes construction without revitalizing productive sectors.
2. The concentration of economic activity in major corporations or foreign contractors, marginalizing local added value and weakening employment generation.
3. The reproduction of economic dependency by linking the economy to unstable arrangements governing movement and border crossings.

4. A lack of alignment between reconstruction and institutional reform, including financial governance, transparency, oversight, and public procurement.

Accordingly, an economic comparison of the plans should not be limited to cost estimates. It should also examine the sources and conditions of financing, the design of expenditure mechanisms, the level of local content and participation, and the contribution of the Palestinian private sector.

• **Political and Governance Dimension**

The matrix demonstrates that the fundamental disagreement among the plans is not merely technical, but primarily political and governance-related especial the plans after 2025. Some plans treat Palestinians as recipients, a labor force, or even passive beneficiaries within transitional international arrangements, while others provide them, to varying degrees, with greater representation through the Palestinian Authority or national institutional arrangements.

The controversy becomes more pronounced in proposals that transfer decision-making authority to international transitional entities, funds, or trusteeship-style frameworks such as the PA and Phenix plans. These arrangements raise legitimate concerns regarding legitimacy, accountability, and the limits placed on Palestinian sovereignty over the reconstruction process. They also create problems relating to governance, administration, and regulatory and legal decision-making.

The plans that raise the greatest concern are those that assign reconstruction an implicit political function: reshaping the territory, population, or system of governance in exchange for financing, or linking recovery to external security arrangements that override Palestinian national will (investment plans). The principal concerns generally center on:

1. Transferring decision-making authority to a non-Palestinian or unelected entity.
2. Conditioning financing in ways that disregard political rights or restrict self-determination.
3. Ignoring the issue of refugees and the right of return, or treating it as a deferred matter outside the scope of the plan.

These plans should therefore not be viewed merely as competing technical alternatives. Rather, they represent competing visions for Gaza's political, economic, and institutional future. They must consequently be assessed both in terms of practical feasibility and in terms of rights, representation, and sovereignty.

• **Gender Dimension**

Women and children account for approximately 42.5%³ of all the 2023 war fatalities. The proportion of women and girls among the fatalities was significantly higher than that recorded in previous conflicts in Gaza. These deaths have brought profound changes to family structures in Gaza, caregiving arrangements, sources of income, legal rights, and social protection needs.

3 UN Women Advocacy brief (17 April 2026) The cost of war in Gaza on women and girls – available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/advocacy-brief-the-cost-of-war-in-gaza-on-women-and-girls-un-women-17apr26/>
UNRWA (Sep 2025) Situation Report #187 on The Humanitarian Crisis In The Gaza Strip And The Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Available at: <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-187>

The war on Gaza has devastated all aspects of life, with its most tragic impact reflected in the staggering loss of human life. Between October 2023 and December 2025, at least 22,000 women and 16,000 girls were killed as a result of Israeli bombardments and ground military operations (UN Women, 2026; UNRWA, 2025)⁴.

The targeting of Palestinian men has also contributed to a sharp increase in the number of women-headed households, with approximately 57,200 households in Gaza now headed by women.

The pattern of bombardment and attacks on residential buildings has also produced distinctly gendered impacts, with women and children accounting for 70% of all injuries (World Bank, 2026).⁵

These are not merely reconstruction-related concerns, but long-term challenges affecting housing design, transportation, education, livelihoods, rehabilitation, social protection, and caregiving arrangements within households. They also create legal and psychological needs relating to inheritance, property rights, compensation, guardianship, and family reunification, issues that most plans have overlooked.

Recovery and reconstruction plans must therefore incorporate a gender perspective and address both its current and future implications. Reconstruction that disregards the social fabric and women's share in recovery and development will weaken efforts to restore a functioning society and economy and will perpetuate deprivation, inequality, and despair.

These plans must therefore engage more deeply with gender systems and related needs, including reproductive health, care work, women's rehabilitation, and the broader gender-related risks faced by women. (United Nations, 2026)

7. Relevant International Legal Framework⁶

Reconstruction projects in Gaza should be governed by a body of international legal rules and principles that define the rights and obligations of the parties concerned and establish legal standards to ensure respect for the rights and private property of the civilian population and the preservation of Palestinian sovereignty. This legal framework is closely relevant to assessing the legitimacy and acceptability of the various proposed plans.

The principal applicable rules include international humanitarian law, which prohibits forced displacement and the destruction of property; legal principles safeguarding the right to self-determination and permanent sovereignty over natural resources; decisions of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and mechanisms of accountability; and relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and General Assembly.

4 UN Women. (April 20, 2026). Who are the women and girls behind Gaza war's horrific casualty toll? <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2026/04/who-are-the-women-and-girls-behind-gaza-wars-horrific-casualty-toll>

5 The World Bank, along with the United Nations and the European Union, released a joint Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) in April 2026. While the report notes that roughly 70% to 76% of all housing units and general infrastructure have been destroyed or damaged across Gaza, figures specifying a "70% injury rate" do not appear as a direct health statistic in the joint findings. Available at: https://www.ochaopt.org/sites/default/files/Gaza_Reported_Impact_Snapshot_8_July_2026.pdf

6 For all legal references, see the Legal References list.

UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions provide an important legal and political point of reference. Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) call for Israel's withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, including Gaza, and for a just settlement of the conflict based on the principle of land for peace. General Assembly Resolution 194 (1948) affirms the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and receive compensation for the losses and damage they have suffered. This right constitutes an essential component of any just and lasting settlement. Keeping in mind that the majority of Gazans are refugees (1948, 1967), in addition to being internally displaced.

In September 2024, the General Assembly adopted a resolution ⁷calling on member states to refrain from providing aid or support to Israel in connection with its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including through any reconstruction arrangements that could perpetuate occupation or annexation.

Based on the legal rules and principles outlined above, several fundamental criteria may be applied when assessing the legitimacy of the various reconstruction plans:

- **First**, any plan must respect Palestinian sovereignty and the right to self-determination. This requires Palestinians to exercise genuine leadership and hold final decision-making authority over planning, implementation, and oversight.
- **Second**, the rights of the civilian population must be protected, including the right to return to their homes, property rights, protection from forced displacement, and the right to participate meaningfully in decisions concerning their future.
- **Third**, any plan must include clear mechanisms for accountability for destruction and damage. This requires the determination of legal responsibility for widespread devastation and guarantees of fair and adequate compensation.
- **Fourth**, all stages of reconstruction must fully comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the principles of transparency, community participation, and accountability.
- **Fifth**, any arrangements that reinforce the occupation, undermine Palestinian sovereignty, cause population displacement, or alter the demographic or geographic character of Palestinian territory must be rejected.

Ultimately, this international legal framework provides a clear and objective standard for assessing the various plans. Any plan that conflicts with these criteria lacks international legal legitimacy, poses a threat to established Palestinian rights, and should either be rejected or reformulated to comply with international law and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

8. The Plans from the Perspective of International Law Principles

It is not sufficient to assess Gaza reconstruction plans solely as technical or financial proposals, as a significant part of their content directly concerns rights protected under international law and the legal limits governing permissible postwar arrangements. Accordingly, this review examines the 14 plans in terms of their overall compatibility with a set of governing legal principles.

⁷ In September 2024, the [UN General Assembly](#) adopted Resolution [A/RES/ES-10/24](#) demanding that Israel end its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory within 12 months, and calling on states not to render aid or assistance in maintaining it

Legal Principle	What Does It Mean in Practice for Reconstruction?	Where Does the Risk Typically Arise?
Prohibition of forcible transfer and displacement	Reconstruction must not become a tool for reshaping the population or preventing people from returning to their homes.	In plans that link investment to the reorganization of property ownership and population distribution, or that disregard the right to return home.
Protection of property and housing and land rights	Reconstruction must safeguard property rights and prevent the confiscation of property without adequate legal guarantees.	In plans that rely on investment models or holding companies without clear safeguards for property rights.
The right to self-determination and sovereignty over public decision-making	The question of who makes decisions is not merely administrative; it is inherently political and legal.	In long-term trusteeship arrangements that deprive Palestinians of effective decision-making authority.
Duty of accountability and prevention of impunity	Reconstruction does not eliminate the obligation to investigate crimes and compensate those harmed. Otherwise, reconstruction becomes a substitute for justice.	When a plan is presented as a development program entirely detached from the context of crimes and violations, thereby normalizing the status quo.
Principle of non-recognition of unlawful situations and non-assistance in their continuation	Donors and implementing entities must avoid arrangements that entrench the blockade or occupation or treat them as a permanent basis for reconstruction.	In plans that accept the blockade as a given or propose security arrangements that restrict development and sovereignty over the long term.
Rights-based principles of equality, non-discrimination, and participation	Reconstruction must ensure participation, prevent exclusion, promote equity, and protect the groups most severely affected.	In plans that focus on investment or large-scale projects without clear mechanisms for participation or local governance.
Compensation and reparations	Reconstruction involves more than constructing new buildings. It must also provide compensation, restore the rights of those harmed, and remedy the consequences of the damage.	When no mechanism for compensation or reparations is provided, reconstruction is treated solely as an engineering exercise.

Practical Examples of How Legal Principles Apply to the Proposed Models

- International trusteeship and transitional governance models, such as GITA and the GREAT Trust, raise concerns directly related to the right to self-determination and the limits of legitimacy and accountability. The more decision-making authority is transferred to international executive bodies or long-term external mandate arrangements, the more limited meaningful Palestinian decision-making becomes. Reconstruction then shifts from a process of support to one that substitutes for the national will, which conflicts with the essence of self-determination as an undiminished right.
- Long-term investment and privatization models, including build-operate-transfer (BOT) arrangements and certain public-private partnership (PPP) proposals, may undermine legal protections for property and housing and land rights in the absence of clear safeguards for documentation, compensation, and the settlement of property disputes.

- Proposals that include elements of so-called voluntary relocation or displacement, or incentives to leave, directly implicate the prohibition of forcible transfer and displacement. There is, in practice, no genuine “voluntary displacement” where the decision is shaped by coercion or pressure arising from war, blockade, and the absence of viable alternatives.

9. The Plans from the Perspective of Potential Political Scenarios

This section links the findings of the preceding comparison to the political realities that may shape the “day after” phase. It presents broad scenarios for possible reconstruction pathways without assuming that any single scenario will necessarily materialize. In practice, these scenarios may overlap, unfold sequentially, or change as the political environment evolves, and new pathways may emerge in response to political, security, or financial developments.

The purpose of this analysis is to clarify what may make a particular plan viable in one context, and what may make it less feasible or more hazardous in another.

• **Palestinian-Led Reconstruction under a Regional and International Framework**

Under this scenario, reconstruction would be led by an official elected Palestinian body, including ministries and municipalities, and Gazans, the PLO as the body representing Gazans in GS and in the diaspora, and guaranteeing a wider range of political representation, with coordinated Arab and international support and a formal framework for donor coordination. The process would move gradually from early recovery to reconstruction, while linking reconstruction to the geographic unity of Palestine and the restoration of institutional functions.

This scenario would require a relatively stable ceasefire, regional and international acceptance of Palestinian leadership, and arrangements governing border crossings and the flow of materials that enable implementation. It would strengthen local legitimacy and accountability, increase opportunities for Palestinian participation in implementation through employment, contracting, and procurement, and reduce the risks associated with long-term trusteeship.

Potential risks include the politicization or delay of financing, limited institutional and absorptive capacity during the initial months, and the fragmentation of programs if multiple funding channels operate without a unified framework. This scenario is more likely to activate plans that assume Palestinian leadership and formal institutional coordination, while making trusteeship-based proposals less politically viable, even if they remain on the table as a source of negotiating pressure.

• **Short-Term International Transitional Governance**

Under this scenario, a transitional arrangement would be established under international administration or supervision and based on an external political mandate. It would operate for a limited period defined as a stabilization and reconstruction management phase, with varying levels of Palestinian involvement, generally restricted to technical implementation or advisory roles.

This scenario would depend on strong international political backing and financial support conditioned on excluding the Palestinian Authority from substantive decision-making. It could

accelerate certain financing and implementation processes, particularly where donors are reluctant to commit funds without international oversight arrangements. Its principal risk is the marginalization of the Palestinian role.

- **Conditional Private-Sector-Led Investment Reconstruction under External Security Arrangements**

This scenario would direct reconstruction toward a portfolio of large-scale investment projects involving long-term contracts, concessions, and public-private partnership or build-operate-transfer models. These arrangements would be explicitly linked to external security and risk-management frameworks, with investment treated as the principal driver of recovery.

The scenario is likely to emerge where public financing is limited, demand for conditional investment is high, long-term concession arrangements are accepted, or efforts are made to bypass public institutions through a holding company. It could enable rapid implementation of selected projects, such as housing, infrastructure, and commercial zones, provided the necessary inputs are available.

Potential risks include weak social justice and unequal distribution of benefits. The creation of an influential and dominant local class/group. The marginalization of the local economy, threats to property, housing, and land rights, and the transformation of reconstruction into a concession-based economy that entrenches long-term dependency rather than building a productive economic base.

This scenario explains why certain plans may appear financially attractive while raising serious concerns from a rights and governance perspective. It also underscores the importance of integrating the Palestinian private sector within transparent rules rather than replacing it with external consortia.

- **Continuation of the Status Quo and Fragmented, Slow Recovery under Ongoing Restrictions**

Under this scenario, no comprehensive reconstruction process would emerge. Interventions would instead be reduced to fragmented emergency assistance, repairs, and service projects, while restrictions on movement and materials remain in place or recurring cycles of escalation prevent stable implementation.

This scenario would be characterized by a fragile ceasefire, continued restrictions at border crossings, multiple de facto authorities or weak coordination, and declining financial commitments or their redirection exclusively toward humanitarian assistance.

Expected outcomes include the rising cost of delay through prolonged recovery, the continuation of an economy of scarcity and intermediaries, the erosion of human capital, and growing social risks over the medium term. This situation is similar to the one prevailing in the West Bank.

Although this scenario is the least consistent with the spirit of most major reconstruction plans, its persistence to date makes it a realistic possibility. Unless a political breakthrough occurs

and the implementation conditions controlled by Israel are eased, every plan must include a phased and operational relief track that can function even under existing restrictions.

These scenarios demonstrate that the success of any plan depends not only on the quality of its design, but also on its compatibility with a realistic political and security trajectory and its capacity to mitigate the risks associated with each scenario. The preceding comparison therefore helps identify which plans are most likely to advance under Palestinian leadership, which are driven by a trusteeship model, which depend on conditional investment, and which would fail under conditions of fragmented recovery.

10. Recommendations

This section presents recommendations relating to the political, legal, and economic dimensions of reconstruction; principles, standards, and comprehensiveness of planning; and measures to facilitate and accelerate recovery and reconstruction.

- **Recommendations for Revising and Strengthening the Structure and Content of the Plans**

Adopt a standardized screening matrix before treating any plan as an implementation framework: The report recommends using the nine dimensions set out in this review as a standardized checklist for assessing any new plan or initiative. These dimensions include the entity that prepared the plan, implementation mechanisms, Palestinian representation, security and economic models, the political horizon, coordination with the Palestinian Authority, and implementation conditions. This would help prevent decision-makers from being drawn to visually appealing plans that lack clarity regarding governance, financing, and responsibilities, while ensuring consistent comparison among proposals regardless of their source.

Distinguish between forward-looking visions and operational programs in assessment and citation: The review recommends clearly distinguishing, in both presentation and analysis, between plans that offer long-term visions or broad spatial and economic concepts and those that provide operational programs with defined timelines, financing structures, and institutional roles. This distinction reduces confusion for readers, avoids imposing unrealistic implementation expectations on forward-looking visions, and prevents operational documents from being treated merely as “political visions” without examining their implementation mechanisms.

Approach transitional governance and trusteeship proposals cautiously from the perspective of legitimacy and accountability: The review notes that some plans propose international transitional governance arrangements or long-term trusteeship mechanisms and funds. The report recommends that such proposals always be presented alongside explicit consideration of legitimacy, accountability, and the limits placed on Palestinian decision-making: Who makes the decisions? Who holds the mandate? What mechanisms ensure transparency and oversight? And how can transitional arrangements be prevented from becoming a permanent substitute for Palestinian sovereignty or a framework for restricting it?

Integrate rights, property, and reparations into feasibility assessments rather than treating them as an ethical addendum: The report recommends treating the protection of property and housing and land rights, compensation and reparations, and the prevention of

forced displacement as practical factors that directly affect feasibility and sustainability, rather than merely as normative principles. Neglecting these dimensions may generate social and legal disputes that obstruct implementation or undermine its legitimacy within the community, even where financing and technical arrangements are available.

- **Recommendations Relating to the Political and Economic Dimensions**

To address these challenges, the most effective course is to reestablish a long-term sovereign economic approach based on the following principles:

1. **Palestinian sovereignty:** Ensure full national decision-making authority and Palestinian control over priorities and implementation mechanisms, free from external trusteeship, while limiting the role of external actors to assistance, support, and facilitation.
2. **Freedom from conditionality:** Separate reconstruction from externally imposed financing agendas that conflict with Palestinian national requirements, while emphasizing the importance of an effective role for the Palestinian Authority.
3. **International legal framework:** Ensure compliance with international law, human rights standards, and relevant United Nations resolutions.

- **Recommendations Relating to Comprehensive Planning**

Plans should address all dimensions of recovery and reconstruction simultaneously. This requires comprehensive coverage of all the areas listed below:

1. **Housing and Urban Reconstruction:** Rebuilding housing units, planning urban neighborhoods, managing land, and developing public spaces.
2. **Infrastructure and Public Utilities:** Restoring electricity and water supplies, sanitation and wastewater systems, solid waste management, telecommunications, and transportation networks.
3. **Economic Recovery and Private-Sector Development:** Supporting businesses and economic enterprises, creating employment opportunities, promoting investment, facilitating trade, and strengthening livelihoods.
4. **Health and Social Protection:** Restoring healthcare facilities and services, providing psychosocial support, and strengthening social assistance programs and social protection systems.
5. **Education, Culture, and Human Development:** Rebuilding schools, restoring higher education and vocational training, protecting cultural heritage, and supporting youth development.
6. **Governance, Public Administration, and Local Government:** Restoring the functioning of public institutions, improving municipal services, strengthening administrative capacity, and enhancing public accountability mechanisms.
7. **Environment, Climate Resilience, and Natural Resource Management:** Supporting environmental rehabilitation, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and the sustainable management of natural resources.
8. **Community Development, Social Cohesion, and Inclusion:** Promoting community participation, gender equality, the inclusion of persons with disabilities, stronger local community engagement, and conflict-sensitive approaches to reconstruction.

- **Recommendations for Facilitating and Accelerating the Transition to Practical Implementation**

1. Remove occupation-related restrictions and practices that impede the implementation of reconstruction plans.
2. Achieve Palestinian national consensus and establish a unified political vision.
3. Build a productive local economy by assigning a central role to the Palestinian private sector.
4. Adopt a fundamentally different approach to reconstruction from those used in previous experiences, as the scale and nature of the destruction in Gaza are unprecedented and differ significantly from earlier reconstruction contexts. This requires substantial international financial and political support, as well as enabling the effective use of local resources.
5. Revitalize and empower local authorities, civil society organizations, and the local economy by creating the conditions necessary for local economic development, including employment generation and capacity building, and by ensuring that Palestinians in Gaza are not merely beneficiaries but active participants in early recovery and reconstruction.
6. Strengthen the coordination and strategic focus of international institutions by aligning their interventions within a single, coherent, and well-coordinated framework.

11. Conclusion and Summary

This paper demonstrates that plans for the reconstruction of Gaza should not be assessed solely by their level of technical detail or the amount of proposed financing, but also by their strategic political, economic, and governance frameworks and the extent to which they align with Palestinian priorities. In this context, the need to preserve the unity of Palestinian land, people, and institutions is paramount, alongside the consensual restructuring of the political system. This requires maintaining the geographic unity of Gaza and the West Bank. The comparison confirms that any plan that bypasses Palestinian leadership or confines the Palestinian role to technical implementation weakens the prospects for sustainability and poses serious risks to sovereignty and legitimacy, even if it appears financially viable in the short term.

The paper also highlights the importance of integrating the Palestinian private sector into any reconstruction process, not as a substitute for the public sector or social justice, but as a national driver of employment and the revitalization of local production. The proposed plans must therefore be reviewed and revised to advance Palestinian sovereignty and territorial unity and to move away from approaches that turn reconstruction into a gateway to long-term trusteeship.

From this perspective, the following conclusions may be drawn:

- The proliferation of plans and proposals over the past year cannot be understood merely as a series of technical responses to the ongoing war on Gaza. These initiatives must also be viewed as early attempts to anticipate and reshape the future political, social, and urban order in Palestine through the framework of the “day after.”
- The importance of examining “day after” plans lies not only in the opportunity they provide for critical or technical analysis, but also in the fact that such examination is itself an act of sovereignty. The analysis is not merely a review of reconstruction or engineering alternatives; it is a gradual effort to reclaim symbolic and, to some extent, intellectual agency over Palestine’s future.

- The structure and orientation of most of these plans reflect a failure to recognize Palestinians themselves as the sovereign and authoritative source of knowledge, whether at the official or popular level. Since reconstruction is not merely a technical undertaking, its political and sovereign dimensions must be fully considered.
- Most plans disregard Palestinians as political actors and partners in planning, treating them instead as passive subjects. Only a limited number of plans depart from this approach, including the Gaza Phoenix Plan and the national plan developed by the Ministry of Planning.

The central conclusion is that critically examining these plans does not mean rejecting them wholesale. Rather, it means restoring the capacity to assess them accurately, redirecting priorities toward Palestinian national interests, and refusing to allow reconstruction to become an instrument for reasserting control and undermining Palestinian sovereignty. The Palestinian plan emerged alongside these proposals and may be regarded as a bold initiative aimed at advancing sovereignty and development. It could provide a solid foundation for a political approach or for negotiations grounded in a coherent national program.