

Executive Summary

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Pursuing Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration in Gaza

A Critical Pathway to a Durable Peace—Executive Summary

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About This Executive Summary

Hamas militants from the Gaza Strip crossed into Israel on October 7, 2023, initiating an attack on civilians and Israeli forces of exceptional brutality. The attack, and the equally severe response by the Israel Defense Forces, initiated an unprecedented conflict in Gaza that continued for two years and led to more than 70,000 casualties in the Gaza Strip alone.[1] On October 10, 2025, a ceasefire leading to hostage and prisoner exchanges went into effect, marking the first phase of President Donald Trump's 20-point plan for ending the conflict and paving the way for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.[2] The formal transition to the second phase of the plan was announced on January 14, 2026, yet the implementation of this phase is contingent largely on Hamas's disarmament, as stipulated in point 13 of the plan. Nonetheless, how disarmament is defined and how to achieve it remain elusive.

In the full paper, we examine these questions through a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) lens. Drawing on extensive workshops,[3] interviews with subject-matter experts, and a review of a subset of historical precedents, we propose a DDR framework for Gaza. We acknowledge the political and operational challenges that bode ill for the success of such an endeavor in general and in Gaza in particular, and we describe the preconditions necessary for a successful DDR program in Gaza, including the link to deradicalization, which is also mentioned specifically as point 1 in President Trump's plan.

The overall context in which the DDR framework is presented draws from an extensive road map of security, governance, economic, physical and social, and international initiatives that RAND researchers set forth in 2025 in two reports: *Pathways to a Durable Israeli-Palestinian Peace* and *From Camps to Communities: Post-Conflict Shelter in Gaza*.[4]

This paper should be of interest to Israelis and Palestinians, policymakers in the United States, other nations in the Middle East region, and the international community. This paper is oriented to foreign policy and regional experts and to organizations and individuals committed to finding a durable and peaceful resolution to decades of conflict and terrorism and untold suffering.

To read the full paper, visit www.rand.org/t/PEA3486-1.

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[1] Emanuel Fabian, "IDF Believes 70,000 Gazans Killed in War, as Claimed by Hamas; Civilian-Combatant Ratio Unclear," *Times of Israel*, January 29, 2026.

[2] "Trump's 20-Point Gaza Peace Plan in Full," BBC, last updated October 9, 2025.

[3] Workshops were hosted by the Economic Cooperation Foundation and the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv and by the Royal United Services Institute in London in late 2025.

[4] Charles P. Ries, Daniel Egel, Shelly Culbertson, David E. Thaler, C. Ross Anthony, Robin Meili, Mark Christopher Schwartz, Amal Altwaijri, Raphael S. Cohen, Marzia Giambertoni, Trevor Johnston, Robert Lane, Clara de Lataillade, Pauline Paillé, Theiline Pigott, Eric S. Rubin, Kobi Ruthenberg, Alexandra Stark, and Michael T. Wilson, *Pathways to a Durable Israeli-Palestinian Peace*, RAND Corporation, RR-A3486-1, 2025 (available at www.rand.org/t/RRA3486-1); Shelly Culbertson, Kobi Ruthenberg, Robert Lane, Nitay Lehrer, Mary E. Vaiana, and C. Ross Anthony, *From Camps to Communities: Post-Conflict Shelter in Gaza*, RAND Corporation, RR-A3486-2, 2025 (available at www.rand.org/t/RRA3486-2).

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The war in Gaza has become one of the largest military and humanitarian disasters of the 21st century, and its impacts are profound. An enduring resolution not only to the past two years but also to decades of violence is long overdue. Such a resolution, however, is contingent on Hamas's disarmament, or rather on a more holistic disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) effort, which is reinforced by long-term commitment from international actors. Without this effort, the endless cycle of violence is doomed to repeat itself.

The United States is leading the international effort—based on the Board of Peace, an executive board for Gaza with an office of a High Representative, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, a local police force, and an International Stabilization Force (ISF)—to stabilize Gaza and create the basis of an Israeli-Palestinian peace. Hamas must agree to disarm and decommission, as provided in the 20-point peace framework. A sustained effort and long-term engagement by regional and international actors are the only way for this endeavor to move forward and potentially succeed.

Key Findings

The full paper explains that disarmament of insurgents, especially those forces that have dug in against strong adversaries, is difficult to carry out. An examination of recent successful and unsuccessful analogous efforts (Northern Ireland, Kosovo, and Colombia) suggests a number of lessons that can be adapted to the Gaza milieu. DDR is not an afterthought but rather linked to security for both Israelis and Palestinians, as well as initiatives to enhance governance, justice and law enforcement, education, and resources, in addition to deradicalization.

For Gaza, the preconditions for a successful DDR effort include the following:

- a negotiated DDR agreement between the partners, conducted under international neutral supervision with Hamas's commitment to transition to nonviolence and decommissioning of weapons
- tight coupling with measures to keep money and guns away from Hamas and to ensure that government contracts, key government jobs, and other preferments do not go to Hamas or those who share Hamas's ideology that attacks on Israel are justified
- early decommissioning (even during negotiations) of the tunnel system, production facilities, missiles, rockets, and drones—armaments and military infrastructure that fall under the category of *heavy weapons*
- clear eligibility standards for participation in the process, including appropriate categories of arms
- a mandate for the ISF that provides short-term security and public order in support of humanitarian aid and recovery operations
- linkages with educational reform and deradicalization programs
- a positive framing of DDR as part of the endeavor to stabilize Gaza, using alternative terminology if needed for easier acceptance by Palestinians and Israelis. A concerted effort will require socializing this concept and celebrating milestones and successes to sustain positive momentum and inject hope.

Emplacing a DDR and deradicalization framework in Gaza will be a uniquely demanding agenda for Palestinians and Israelis and for the international community. Both Israeli and Palestinian societies have been traumatized by the violence and duration of the conflict. A credible DDR program, in connection with a long-term commitment from the international community to support governance, reconstruction, and economic growth for Gaza—and a political horizon—as envisaged in the 20-point peace plan, is the only realistic way forward.