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Gaza - An Opportunity!

Guidelines for the demilitarization of Gaza and a long-term arrangement in the South

MK Omer Barlev

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consists of several overlapping, horizontal arrows pointing to the right. The arrows are in various shades of teal and blue, with the topmost arrow being a light teal and the bottommost being a dark blue. The arrows have a slight 3D effect with shadows.



► Following Operation Protective Edge...

Last summer was difficult, very difficult. For the third time in the last six years, we were engaged in military action against Hamas in Gaza. The price was heavy in human life, on the morale of our citizens and on the economy, particularly for Israelis who live in the South; and the next round of fighting is considered unavoidable. Looking afar, we see a world which regards Israel as responsible for the residents of the Gaza Strip (henceforth referred to as Gaza) and as the force which continues to deny free movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza. Moreover, that same “world” was slow to condemn Hamas for firing on Israel.

Diplomatic progress with the Palestinians seems very distant in light of the last round of talks and the growing fear that a diplomatic solution can turn the West Bank into another “Gaza”.

How can we break this vicious cycle of war? This document presents a practical approach that can lead to a change in the South: a long - term cessation of hostilities; elimination of “Raindrops” firing on Israel and prevention of another round of military confrontation. Unlike the disagreement in the Israeli public regarding the future territorial arrangements in the West Bank, in the case of Gaza there are neither religious nor settlement disputes regarding the future borders, creating consensus that can contribute to the success of this proposed plan. Contrary to the belief shared by Israelis, a “Gaza - first” solution prior to negotiations on the West Bank can restore trust to both Israel and the PA that the end of the conflict is possible. In turn, a door for a peace which assures the future of Israel as a democratic state with a Jewish majority living within safe borders will open.

Ultimately, this is our goal!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'א. ברלב' (A. Barlev).

MK Omer Barlev
Labor Party

Gaza: a map of interests

The current intersection of international interests and forces pushing in one direction - weakening Hamas and increasing involvement of Abu Mazen in Gaza - provide a unique opportunity for progress.

Interests:

- ▶ Removal of the aggressive threat from Gaza (rockets, mortars, tunnels)
- ▶ Release from the burden and responsibility of providing Gaza with energy, water, food and infrastructure services; all of which is perceived by the world as a continuation of Israel's control of Gaza.

Role:

- ▶ Assuring strict enforcement of the principle of demilitarization of Gaza in return for opening its doors to the world through economic development including sea and air ports and independent water and energy capabilities.

ISRAEL

Interests:

- ▶ Reduce the struggle with the Muslim Brothers, Hamas' parent organization, and mitigate their destabilizing influence in Sinai.
- ▶ Strengthen the legitimacy of Egypt's president A-Sisi's regime in the eyes of the United States and Europe.
- ▶ Strengthen Egypt's position and claim for Arab hegemony in the Middle East, in relation to Turkey and Iran, Hamas' patrons.

Role:

- ▶ Continue blockage of tunnels between Rafiah and Gaza (only in this way will Hamas understand that it will face bankruptcy by not disarming in return for development assistance).

EGYPT

Interests:

- ▶ Increased stability in the Middle East.
- ▶ Shared concerns with moderate Sunni states in light of their military alliance against ISIS.

Role:

- ▶ Provide international approval of the agreement. (the EU countries have already declared the need for demilitarization and supervision in return for reopening Gaza to the world).
- ▶ Dismantle the offensive armaments in Gaza and provide oversight on the disarmament, led by the United States.
- ▶ Manage and provide oversight of future economic projects in Gaza.

THE QUARTET

Interests:

- ▶ Reduce the existential struggle between moderate Sunni countries and fundamental, radical Muslim Sunni forces like Hamas.
- ▶ Reduce the struggle of oil suppliers between Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates and Qatar, Hamas' patrons.

Role:

- ▶ In cooperation with the World Bank, provide the financial support for a future arrangement, via the PA and not directly to Hamas.

THE ARAB LEAGUE

Interests:

- ▶ Restore a PA presence in Gaza which has been absent since Hamas pushed them out in 2007.
- ▶ Prevent Hamas from directly receiving monies for rehabilitation and development.

Role:

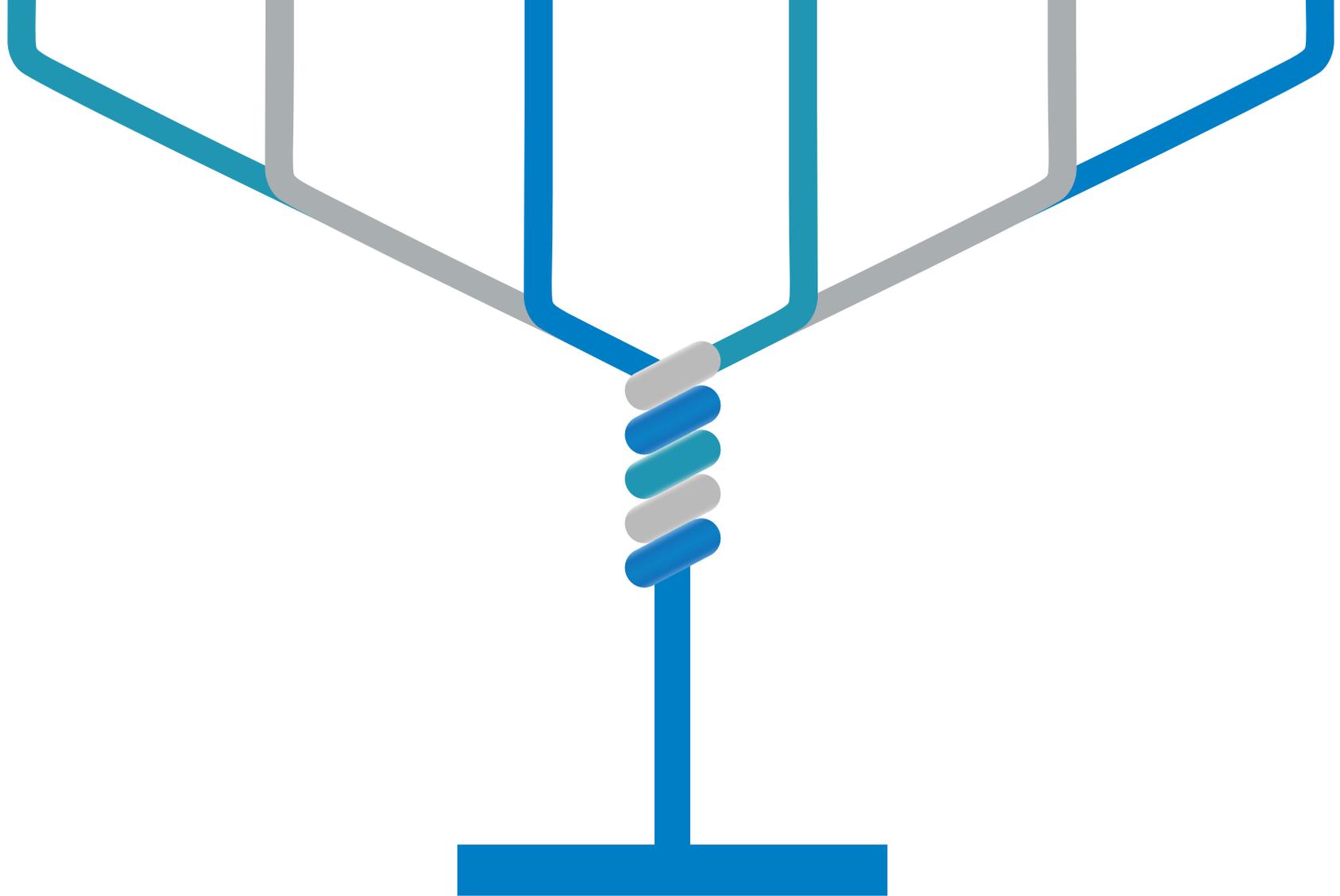
- ▶ To bring the majority of the active Palestinian organizations in Gaza to the negotiating table, reducing the impact of their internal disagreements, while improving the chances of successful implementation of a future agreement.
- ▶ To connect international organizations with planners and operators of programs for the reconstruction and development projects in Gaza. (the PA has already begun to serve as a channel for funds to Gaza).
- ▶ To serve as a barrier at border crossings in Gaza (this has already begun).

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

Interests:

- ▶ It is reasonable to assume that, given current confrontation over the Ukraine, Russia will avoid further escalation with the West.

RUSSIA



Push Hamas to the corner, NOW!

On the eve of Operation Protective Edge Hamas was already choked! Egypt had destroyed 1,200 tunnels used for smuggling into Gaza. Dollars from Qatar stopped coming in. Movement of goods through the tunnels came to a halt as did the “taxes” taken by Hamas from the merchants. Hamas was unable to pay salaries to 45,000 civil servants in Gaza. Hamas opened fire on Israel with a demand to open Gaza to the world. When the campaign ended, Hamas claimed victory but, in the long run, their condition did not improve, undoubtedly due to war damage and restoration costs. It is clear to Hamas that it must offer Gaza residents economic hope and well-being, not just wars, killing and destruction.

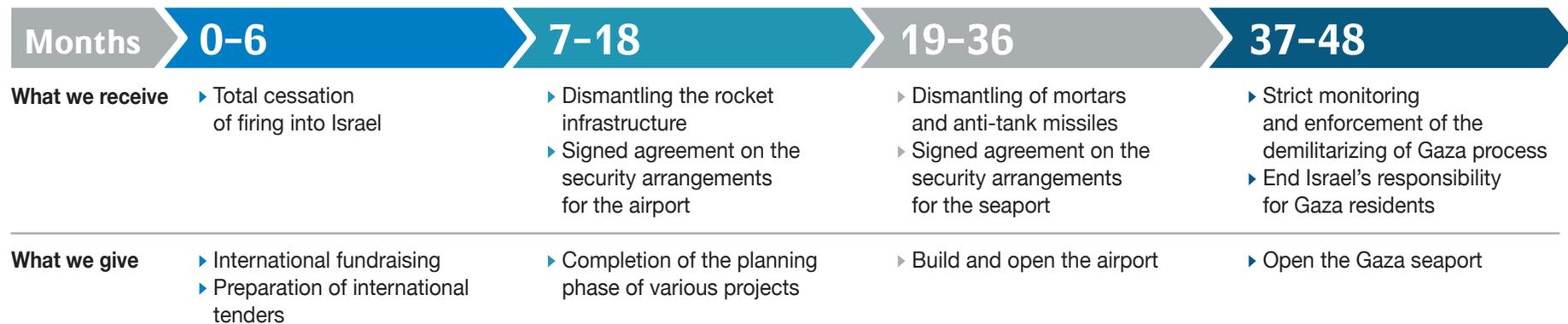
Hamas has two options at this point: return to bankruptcy and isolation from the world or give the PA a standing in Gaza, enabling economic development and the opening of Gaza to the world through a seaport and airport. Firm international cooperation and pressure will likely lead Hamas to give up its offensive capabilities, which were already seriously diminished in Protective Edge, and agree to United States demilitarization forces in Gaza.

Today more than ever, the potential for an agreement is real!

Agreement Implementation Schedule

Planning and execution of infrastructure projects takes years and requires certainty that they can be completed. Disarmament and the dismantling of weapons can happen in a few months, providing confidence that the longer range objectives are achievable. This plan is predicated on completion of the disarmament simultaneously with the execution of the international planning phase and monitoring of the disarmament throughout the projects phase.

These checks and balances will provide assurance that the conditions of the agreement will be honored. Only if the disarmament is deemed effective by the monitors will the economic projects proceed to execution phases. Israel's leverage is guaranteed through her ability to withdraw from the process at any given time if it is proven that Hamas has violated the agreement by bringing or building weapons in Gaza.



Questions & Answers

1

Hamas is a terrorist organization. Are we willing to engage in negotiations with it?

Negotiations are carried out with enemies. It is obvious that an agreement with the Palestinian Authority, without Hamas, would be meaningless. However, it would not be wise to negotiate directly with Hamas as that would weaken the PA and the coalition of moderate Sunni countries. It would be right to negotiate directly with the Palestinian Authority, with Hamas and Jihad alongside as partners to the PA, similar to the way in which the negotiations on the ceasefire in Cairo took place

2

If we agree that Hamas will have a harbor and an airport, will tunnels and rockets return?

Hamas will first have to **give** in order to **receive!** Sea and airports will begin operating years after disarmament of Gaza. This will allow us to evaluate the United States' monitoring of the disarmament before opening the ports.

The bottom line: There is nothing for Israel to lose. If no disarmament agreement is achieved, Hamas will rearm and, eventually, resume its attacks on Israel who will then respond. The proposed plan is trying to save us from that grim scenario.

3

Can we rely on a third party to supervise the agreement?

It depends on who the third party is. The United States' ability to disarm a country and to monitor Middle Eastern countries was proven this year with the demobilization of chemical weapons held by the Assad regime. Gaza is a relatively small, flat area where demilitarization should be even easier than in Syria. In addition, American oversight will be reinforced by IDF's intelligence capabilities.

4

Is it not better to first reach an agreement to rehabilitate Gaza and only then discuss disarmament and development?

Gaza is devastated. The residents, as well as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, are in dire condition. Israel's leverage to bring about demilitarization in exchange for rehabilitation and economic development is considerable. If an agreement includes only a "rehabilitation package" there will be less to offer when we come to discuss the development agreement. Furthermore, Hamas and other terrorist groups will likely rebuild over time, having more to lose from disarmament than they do today.

In short: Now is the time - disarmament in return for rehabilitation and development.

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