



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

March 27, 2026

MITZPE DOSSIER

The Gaza Reconstruction Trap

Five cycles. Five reconstructions. Five rearmaments. The model works exactly as designed.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

DISTRIBUTION

Open · Free to share with attribution

IN THIS EDITION

The Gaza Reconstruction Trap	3
The Gaza Reconstruction Trap	4
Every Cycle Rebuilt the Next War	4
Cement Becomes Tunnels — and No Inspector Can Stop It	5
The Institutions That Feed the Loop	6
The Security Guarantee Nobody Will Provide	8
When Separation Ended the Killing	9
Scenarios: Four Paths, No Comfortable Exits	11

The Gaza Reconstruction Trap

THIS week, roughly 4,200 trucks are entering Gaza. Same as last week. Probably the same as next week. That could be ok, except history say it isn't. Not to mention the armed Hamas operatives — carrying light weapons and RPGs — who guard the convoys, direct traffic, and enforce order up to the yellow line. The organization levies a 15% fee on every shipment. That is a tax system — the operational signature of a governing authority, not a defeated insurgency.

Hamas remains Gaza's largest employer. Tens of thousands of operatives — in uniforms and civilian clothing — draw salaries, manage municipal services, and maintain the administrative infrastructure of sovereignty.

Tunnel refurbishment is ongoing. Recruitment is ongoing. Weapons smuggling — including drones — is ongoing.

Col. (res.) Alon Evyatar characterized Hamas's message as clear: the organization still considers itself "the homeowner." The residents of border communities including Netiv HaAsara and Kfar Aza watch this unfold from their living rooms, independently monitoring events beyond the fence, because official assurances that Hamas has been dismantled no longer match what they can see.

No donor conference has convened. No monitoring framework has been designed. No international body has declared "reconstruction." It doesn't matter. The reconstruction cycle is already running.

This is the fifth time. After the 2008–09 war, donors pledged \$4.7 billion. After the 2014 war, they pledged \$5.4 billion. After 2021, Qatar alone pledged \$500 million. After October 7, Trump's Board of Peace received **\$17 billion in pledges**. The total across four major donor conferences now exceeds \$27 billion. Each cycle produced the same output: aid entered, Hamas captured a share, military infrastructure regenerated, and the next war followed. The model has a perfect record. Not of failure — of function. The reconstruction pipeline is the rearmament pipeline. They are the same pipe.

The question this piece answers is not whether the model works. It does. The question is what replacing it actually requires — and whether anyone is willing to pay the cost.

The Gaza Reconstruction Trap

EVERY CYCLE REBUILT THE NEXT WAR

Gaza's reconstruction history is not a sequence of post-war recoveries. It is one mechanism running on repeat, and its output is war.

Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. The greenhouses left by Israeli settlers — a \$14 million investment in economic infrastructure, left specifically to give Palestinians a functioning agricultural base — were looted within hours. Hamas won legislative elections in January 2006 and seized full control of Gaza in a violent coup against the Palestinian Authority in 2007. That twelve-month sequence — withdrawal, asset destruction, election, coup — established the template everything since has followed. The international community invested in Gaza's future. Hamas consumed the investment and converted it to military capacity.

After Operation Cast Lead (2008–09), donors convened at Sharm el-Sheikh in March 2009 and pledged \$4.7 billion, with \$1.6 billion earmarked for Gaza. Saudi Arabia pledged \$1 billion. The United States pledged \$900 million. The conference communiqué spoke of “sustainable recovery” and “institutional capacity-building.” Most of the money never materialized — because Hamas still governed Gaza, and no one could explain how reconstruction aid would avoid becoming military infrastructure under Hamas's control. The unfulfilled pledges were a tacit admission that the donors understood the problem. They pledged anyway, because pledging is what the system does. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon acknowledged that reopening crossings was the “first and indispensable goal.” The crossings reopened. The aid trickled in. Hamas used the reconstruction period to rebuild its rocket inventory and expand its tunnel network — the same pattern that would repeat, at escalating scale, after every subsequent conflict.

After Operation Pillar of Defense (2012), the IDF targeted over 120 tunnels. The eight-day conflict was framed as a targeted degradation of Hamas's offensive capability. Hamas responded by expanding that capability. New offensive tunnel construction began immediately. By January 2013 — weeks after the ceasefire — a new cross-border tunnel was discovered near Kibbutz Nir Oz. The same Nir Oz that Hamas attacked on October 7, 2023. The gap between “degradation” and reconstitution was measured in weeks. Weeks! Not even years.

After Operation Protective Edge (2014) the Cairo Conference pledged \$5.4 billion, with Qatar as the largest single contributor at \$1 billion. Then-Secretary of State John Kerry noted — with no apparent irony — that it was “the third time in less than six years” the international community had been “forced to confront a reconstruction effort.” By December 2016, only 51% of pledges had been disbursed. Arab states accounted for 87% of unfulfilled commitments. Gulf pledges went 78% undelivered. The money that did arrive found its way to Hamas. By April 2015 — less than a year after the ceasefire — Hamas

was using heavy machinery and small bulldozers to accelerate tunnel construction. Iran was transferring tens of millions of dollars to Hamas to rebuild underground infrastructure and replenish rocket arsenals. The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism — the international community’s most sophisticated attempt to control dual-use materials (which we’ll cover in the next section) — was established after this conflict. It failed.

After the 2021 conflict, Qatar pledged another \$500 million. By that point, Hamas claimed to have built 500 kilometers of tunnels under Gaza. Israel destroyed some 60 miles during the eleven-day war — leaving hundreds of miles intact. The reconstruction aid that entered after each of the four prior conflicts had not just replenished Hamas’s capabilities. It had expanded them. Each war ended with a more capable Hamas than the one before.

Ban Ki-moon told the Security Council in 2014 that Gaza was a “tinderbox” and that donors were “wary about giving aid if this cycle of conflict and rebuilding continues.”

The donors gave the aid. The cycle continued.

And on October 7, 2023, more than a thousand Israelis were massacred, hundreds more were abducted, and countless were subjected to rape and torture by a military force that the reconstruction pipeline had armed, housed, trained, and financed for eighteen consecutive years.

Now the Board of Peace has pledged \$17 billion for the sixth round. The UN and World Bank estimate Gaza needs \$70 billion. The Carnegie Endowment’s assessment of the Board, published this month, concluded the body lacks the capacity to deliver, is untethered to international law or standard financial oversight, and is “unlikely to last long.” Cycle six is loading. The only difference is the dollar figure.

CEMENT BECOMES TUNNELS — AND NO INSPECTOR CAN STOP IT

The dual-use problem at the heart of Gaza reconstruction is structurally unsolvable. Every material required to rebuild a house is a material required to rebuild a tunnel. No inspection regime in history has separated civilian end-use from military end-use in a territory governed by the military actor doing the diverting.

The international community tried. The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism — the GRM — was established in September 2014 as a tripartite agreement between Israel, the PA, and the UN. It was the sophisticated answer to an obvious question: how do you get cement into Gaza without it becoming tunnels? The GRM classified aggregate, reinforcing steel bars, and cement as restricted “dual-use” materials. UNOPS established an end-use monitoring unit with a central IT database, GPS tracking of deliveries, PA vetting of all vendors and contractors, and spot-checks by UN-contracted engineers. Israel retained veto power on security grounds.

By January 2017, over 6.5 million tons of construction materials had entered Gaza through the GRM. COGAT acknowledged that Hamas “often attempts to

steal the cement that enters the Gaza Strip in order to construct terror tunnels, rather than reconstruct civilian housing.” A “small proportion” of works underwent spot-checks. The monitoring could track what entered Gaza through official channels. It could not verify where materials went at 2 a.m. once they were inside.

In April 2016, Israel suspended cement imports for the private sector after documented diversion. A cross-border tunnel was discovered — the first since the 2014 conflict — directly coinciding with the diversion. A second tunnel appeared weeks later. Cement prices spiked from 560 to 1,800 NIS per ton — a price signal that told you everything the monitoring system couldn’t. Former Israeli National Security Advisor Maj. Gen. Yaakov Amidror stated that when examining what Hamas did with construction materials, “most went on the tunnels.” An IDF estimate put Hamas tunnel construction costs at \$30–\$90 million, using 600,000 tons of concrete for approximately three dozen cross-border tunnels before 2014 alone.

The precedent is not unique to Gaza. The Iraq Oil-for-Food Programme — established in 1995 to allow Iraq to sell oil in exchange for humanitarian supplies under UN monitoring — ran for eight years before an independent inquiry found Saddam Hussein’s regime had diverted an estimated \$1.8 billion through surcharges and kickbacks. The programme had sophisticated monitoring. The regime controlled the territory. The regime won. The lesson is incredibly consistent. Monitoring regimes fail when the governing authority controlling the territory has both the incentive and the infrastructure to divert.

Iran made the point explicitly in March 2014 when the Israeli Navy intercepted the Klos-C — a cargo ship carrying both weapons and over two million kilograms of cement bound for Gaza.

Dual-use materials and weapons travel the same supply chains. The distinction between “humanitarian” and “military” cargo is a line drawn on a manifest. It does not exist on the ground.

The answer to “can we build a better monitoring framework?” is: the GRM was the better monitoring framework. It had IT databases, GPS, vetting, spot-checks, and Israeli veto authority. Hamas rebuilt some 500 kilometers of tunnels under its watch. The problem is structural. And no redesign of an inspection regime changes the fact that the entity receiving the cement is the entity building the tunnels.

THE INSTITUTIONS THAT FEED THE LOOP

UNRWA, Qatari cash transfers, and the Palestinian Authority are not failed solutions to Gaza’s reconstruction problem. They are load-bearing components of the system that guarantees reconstruction becomes rearmament.

Start with UNRWA. In April 2024, the Israeli government released evidence that at least 500 UNRWA Gaza employees serve in military positions in Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, including senior positions. Terrorist infrastructure was found in at least 30 UNRWA facilities. In July 2024, Israel’s Foreign Ministry sent UNRWA a list of 100 employees identified as Hamas or PIJ

operatives — described as a “small fraction” of the total. In February 2024, IDF troops discovered a **Hamas data center underneath UNRWA’s main headquarters** in Gaza City: a 700-meter tunnel, 18 meters deep, containing server racks, electrical rooms, and living quarters — with electrical infrastructure connected to the UNRWA headquarters above. In April 2025, IDF forces found Hamas weapons cached inside UNRWA-marked humanitarian aid bags near Rafah. UN Watch’s database, unveiled in November 2025, documented 490 UNRWA staff who are members of terrorist groups, with 889 connections between them and senior UNRWA officials. Nine employees were fired after the OIOS investigation found credible evidence of participation in the October 7 attacks — including Mohammad Abu Itiwi, a Hamas Nukhba commander who led the attack on the Re’im shelter, killing sixteen and taking hostages including Hersh Goldberg-Polin *z”l*.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio characterized UNRWA as a “subsidiary of Hamas.” An accurate operational description. The Knesset banned UNRWA from operating within Israel in October 2024, effective January 30, 2025.

UNRWA’s structural problem runs deeper than infiltration. It is the only UN refugee agency that classifies refugee status as hereditary and permanent — a mandate unique among all refugee agencies worldwide. The perpetual classification is a political instrument. It maintains a population in permanent limbo. Prevents absorption by host states. And guarantees a constituency whose status depends on the conflict never ending. Every other refugee crisis in history produced resettlement. This one produces generations of managed grievance.

The evidentiary record since October 7 has only deepened.

Then: Qatar. In 2018, Qatar began transferring \$15 million per month to Gaza in cash-filled suitcases delivered through Israeli territory with Israeli government approval. By 2021, annual aid had reached \$360 million. Between 2014 and 2019, Qatar provided over \$1 billion in reconstruction funds and stipends. Documents captured by the IDF showed Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh reportedly told Yahya Sinwar in 2021 that Qatar’s Emir had “agreed in principle” to “discreetly” fund Hamas military operations. Netanyahu’s office confirmed that beginning March 2022, Hamas diverted \$4 million in Qatari funding to its military wing. The Shin Bet published a report in March 2025 identifying the flow of Qatari money to Hamas’s military wing as a reason Hamas was able to amass offensive power ahead of October 7. Former PM Naftali Bennett stopped the suitcase pipeline because — his words — “I believe that horrendous mistake — to allow Hamas to have all these suitcases full of cash, goes directly to reordering themselves against Israelis.” Qatari funding and policies “led directly to October 7.”

The PA? A 2023 opinion poll found 87% of Palestinians believed the PA was corrupt. The PA was violently expelled from Gaza by Hamas in 2007 and has not exercised effective security control in the territory since. Its forces have failed to contain armed groups even in Judea and Samaria — where it nominally “governs” — making their deployment in Gaza against Hamas operationally implausible. Every “day after” plan that places the PA at the

center of Gaza governance is a plan written by people who have not spoken to the PA's own security commanders. The PA is not a government-in-waiting. It is a fiction of governance that exists because the international community needs a letterhead for its reconstruction plans and a return address for its diplomatic cables.

Three institutions. One ecosystem. Hamas controls it. None of the three has an incentive — or the capacity — to change the fundamental dynamic. UN-RWA's perpetual-refugee mandate creates a permanent constituency for conflict. Qatari cash sustains the military apparatus behind that constituency. The PA provides the international community's fig leaf while exercising zero coercive authority on the ground. Reforming these institutions is the international community's preferred answer — and it is an answer that mistakes plumbing adjustments for structural engineering. The pipes all lead to the same place.

THE SECURITY GUARANTEE NOBODY WILL PROVIDE

Assume — for the sake of argument — that dual-use materials could be monitored and institutional leaks could be sealed. Someone must still physically separate civilian recovery from militant reconstitution. That someone does not exist.

UNIFIL is both precedent and indictment. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has operated in southern Lebanon since 1978 — a laughable forty-seven years as an “interim” force. Its mandate under Security Council Resolution 1701 was to support the Lebanese Armed Forces in establishing an area free of armed personnel, assets, and weapons other than those of the government and UNIFIL.

Under its watch, Hezbollah grew its arsenal from approximately 10,000 rockets in 2006 to an estimated 150,000+ rockets, precision missiles, and drones before the recent conflict — a fifteenfold increase under the supervision of the force tasked with preventing exactly that.

UNIFIL cost approximately \$500 million annually. Three major wars erupted between Israel and militias in Lebanon during its mandate. It failed to preempt, prevent, or resolve any of them.

The US did not request congressional funding for UNIFIL in 2026. The UN Security Council voted to end UNIFIL's mandate by December 2026. After forty-seven years, the international community finally acknowledged what anyone watching the rocket counts already knew.

Hamas knows the playbook — and wants to run it. When presented with the concept of an international stabilization force, Hamas leadership explicitly welcomed the deployment — viewing it as a restraint on Israel, not a mechanism for disarmament.

Mkhaimar Abusada, a Gazan political analyst, noted that Hamas sees an ISF as “restraining the Israeli army” rather than coming in “to disarm” the group. That is the UNIFIL model transplanted to Gaza. An international presence that constrains the defending state while the armed non-state actor builds

freely behind its back. If you've been reading the *Israel Brief*, you know this is something I've been warning about for some time.

The disarmament proposal just presented to Hamas envisions a 90-day timeline for the organization to hand over heavy weaponry and tunnel maps. Hamas is widely expected to reject or counteroffer. Israel was "aware of the proposal" and did not object — believing it would be rejected anyway [which, to be clear, is not a disarmament strategy].

For a bit of context, on the first day of the October 2025 ceasefire, Hamas mobilized approximately 7,000 fighters to reassert control. More than half its tunnel network remained intact.

Five countries have pledged troops to the nascent International Stabilization Force. The force's mission, rules of engagement, and relationship to Hamas remain undefined. PA security forces — the only Arab forces theoretically available — would be "extremely wary of fighting against Hamas in Gaza, where they would be seen as Israel's agents." PCPSR polling from October 2025 is unambiguous: 70% of Palestinians oppose Hamas disarmament. 68% oppose the deployment of an armed Arab force to disarm Hamas in Gaza.

Netanyahu stated in January that Israel is "focusing on completing the two remaining missions: dismantling Hamas's weapons and demilitarizing Gaza." That leaves exactly one actor with both the capability and the stated intent to disarm Hamas: Israel.

The international community will not willingly accept Israeli security control. No other state will provide it. The result is that no one provides it — and reconstruction proceeds under Hamas management. The trap closes.

WHEN SEPARATION ENDED THE KILLING

The historical record of post-conflict population separation is consistent across a century of cases, six conflicts, and three continents. Where hostile populations were separated under organized frameworks, large-scale violence ended and durable stability followed. Where they remained intermixed without governance resolution, violence recurred. The pattern holds regardless of era, geography, or the moral discomfort of the observers.

The Greek-Turkish population exchange is a foundational case. The Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations was signed at Lausanne on January 30, 1923. Article 1 mandated the compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of Greek Orthodox religion and Greek nationals of Muslim religion. Approximately 1.2 million Greek Orthodox were transferred from Anatolia to Greece. Between 400,000 and 500,000 Muslims moved from Greece to Turkey. The total displacement: roughly 1.6 to 2 million people. A U.S. Army Command and General Staff College thesis concluded that the exchange "ended the conflict between Greece and Turkey" and "further prevented potential genocide of Greek Orthodox Christians living in Asia Minor." The displacement was traumatic. The result was durable. Greece and Turkey did not fight another war over the exchanged populations. The border stabilized. Of course, tensions between Turkey and well everyone still remains, but we had a nice duration of "good years."

The post-WWII expulsion of ethnic Germans is the largest case. Article XII of the Potsdam Agreement authorized the transfer of ethnic German populations from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary to the Allied occupation zones. Between 12 and 14 million ethnic Germans were expelled — the largest forced population transfer in modern history. Germany lost approximately 25% of its 1937 territory. The Allies' explicit purpose was to prevent future conflicts arising from sizable German minorities within other nations' borders. The result: no ethnic German insurgency emerged in Poland, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary after the expulsions. The post-war borders held. Germany was rebuilt and integrated into the Western order.

The Jewish expulsion from Arab and Muslim-majority countries is seemingly the case the international community most refuses to discuss. Between 1948 and the early 1970s, approximately 850,000 to 900,000 Jews were expelled or fled from Arab and Muslim-majority countries. By 1972, 600,000 had relocated to Israel, another 300,000 to France, the US, and Canada. Land confiscated from Jews in Arab countries amounted to approximately 40,000 square miles — five times the size of Israel in 1948. Estimated value of confiscated assets: \$250 billion. Israel absorbed this refugee population, nearly doubling its Jewish citizenry. Today, Mizrahi and Sephardi Jews and their descendants comprise more than half of Israel's Jewish population.

This really ought to demolish the “uniqueness” argument against Palestinian resettlement. One side absorbed 850,000 refugees from across the Middle East and North Africa — into a country the size of New Jersey, in the first decades of its existence, with a fraction of the resources available to the Arab world.

The other side — with twenty-two states, vast territory, and immense oil wealth — deliberately refused to absorb a comparable refugee population, maintaining them in camps for political leverage.

UNRWA's perpetual refugee mandate is the institutional mechanism that prevents absorption. The result is seventy-seven years of managed grievance — the one case where separation was not completed, and the one case where the conflict persists.

The India-Pakistan partition of 1947 involved the largest mass migration in history at the time — an estimated ten to twenty million people crossed the new borders. Communal violence during the partition killed hundreds of thousands. The displacement was accompanied by atrocities — massacres, abductions, sexual violence on a mass scale. No honest accounting of partition calls it humane. The analytical verdict is separate from the humanitarian one, though. Where separation was completed — in the core territories of India and Pakistan — large-scale intercommunal violence ended. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs who had been killing each other in mixed villages stopped killing each other once the populations were separated across a defined border. Where separation was not completed — in Kashmir, where the Muslim-majority territory's accession to India left a contested population intermixed under disputed governance — violence continues to this day, nearly eight decades later. Three wars, an ongoing insurgency, and a nuclear

standoff later, Kashmir remains the single most dangerous legacy of incomplete separation. The partition did not create peace. It created the conditions under which peace became possible in the territories where separation held — and demonstrated, through Kashmir, the cost of leaving it unfinished.

Cyprus follows the same pattern. After Turkey's 1974 invasion, approximately 160,000 Greek Cypriots were displaced from the north and 50,000 Turkish Cypriots from the south. The island was partitioned along a UN-monitored buffer zone. The political status remains internationally unresolved — the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is recognized only by Turkey. The de facto separation ended the intercommunal killing that had plagued the island since the 1960s. The Green Line holds.

The Balkans reinforce the finding from a different angle. The Dayton Accords of 1995 ended the Bosnian War — which killed more than 100,000 and produced the Srebrenica genocide — by establishing ethnically defined entities within Bosnia-Herzegovina. NATO's Kosovo Force deployed up to 50,000 troops after 1999 to enforce separation in Kosovo. The international community invested heavily in governance structures, refugee return programs, and integration initiatives. Where ethnic separation was enforced, violence declined. Where mixed populations were expected to reintegrate under shared institutions — as in parts of Bosnia — tensions persisted, frozen rather than resolved.

The Balkans case is the most instructive for Gaza because it demonstrates both the model's power and its limits. Separation stops the killing, but the political architecture built on top of separation determines whether stability holds or merely delays the next round.

Six cases. Different eras, geographies, religions, and scales. The same pattern. Population separation, however painful, ended cycles of intercommunal killing. Populations left intermixed without governance resolution continued to experience violence. *That* is the historical record.

Now apply that record to Gaza. PCPSR polling from October 2025: 53% of all Palestinians said Hamas's decision to launch the October 7 attack was "correct." Nearly 70% oppose Hamas disarmament. 49% of those in Judea and Samaria view armed struggle as the most effective path to statehood. Across six polls since October 7, majorities have consistently endorsed the attack and opposed disarming the organization that carried it out. At the same time, almost half of Gazans said they would leave the Gaza Strip if they could.

The population-level alignment is not ambiguous. The desire to leave — among those living under the consequences — is not hypothetical. The historical precedent for what produces durable peace after intractable intercommunal conflict is not uncertain. The only uncertain variable is whether anyone is willing to act on it.

SCENARIOS: FOUR PATHS, NO COMFORTABLE EXITS

Every option that breaks the reconstruction-to-rearmament cycle is politically unacceptable to someone. The international community will choose

the one option guaranteed to fail — because every alternative requires decisions no one is willing to make.

1. Security-first occupation

Israel maintains full military control over Gaza, enforces demilitarization through sustained ground presence, and permits reconstruction only under direct Israeli security supervision.

This is the post-WWII Germany and Japan model: long-duration occupation, complete disarmament of the defeated power, institutional rebuilding under the occupying authority's direction.

Israel already controls over half of Gaza along the yellow line. Netanyahu has stated Israel will maintain “security control from the Jordan River to the sea, including in Gaza.”

The model has precedent. The cost — in troops, budget, international pressure, and political sustainability within Israel's coalition — is enormous. No other country has offered to share it. The probability that Israel sustains a full occupation for the years required to demilitarize meaningfully — while simultaneously managing the northern front, Judea and Samaria, and the Iranian file — is low. The probability that a partial occupation accomplishes demilitarization is even lower. This path works in theory and strains under political gravity.

2. Governance replacement Strip Hamas of governing authority and replace it with an international or regional administration controlling security, services, education, and economic flows.

The closest analogy is Kosovo post-1999 — UNMIK and KFOR, 50,000 NATO troops, a complete governance apparatus built from scratch.

Hamas is already countering this with a shadow government: five district governors, all linked to the Al-Qassam Brigades, have been named. Hamas has ordered all files copied before any handoff to the new technocratic committee. The PA-linked National Committee for Administration in Gaza — headed by Ali Shaatt, operating under diplomat Nikolay Mladenov — exists on paper.

On the ground however, Hamas operatives manage municipal services and run the tax system. Governance replacement requires force, funding, political consensus, and a willingness to fight Hamas operatives inside

the territory. None of these conditions exist. No version of this has been attempted in the Middle East. The probability of meaningful governance replacement without a prior military defeat of Hamas — which is what the current war was supposed to accomplish — is near zero.

3. **Organized resettlement** Phased, voluntary emigration programs with international resettlement funding, drawing on the historical precedents established above. Multiple Arab and Muslim-majority states — Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Gulf states — have absorptive capacity.

The constraint is political willingness, not economic capacity. Gulf states have absorbed millions of South Asian and Southeast Asian workers while refusing to resettle Palestinians. Again, Palestinian polling shows almost half of Gazans would leave if they could.

International funding at a fraction of the \$70 billion reconstruction estimate could finance resettlement infrastructure, housing, and economic integration in receiving countries.

This is the option with the most consistent historical record of producing durable peace — the Lausanne exchange, the Potsdam expulsions, the Jewish absorption by Israel.

It is also the option with the least political constituency. The word “resettlement” triggers reflexive condemnation from international institutions whose mandates depend on the conflict continuing.

The Arab states that could absorb Palestinian populations have spent seventy-seven years refusing to do so precisely because the refugee population’s permanent status serves their leverage against Israel.

The probability that organized resettlement occurs through international consensus in the near term is roughly nonexistent. The probability that it produces durable stability if it does occur is — based on every comparable historical case — high.

4. **Managed recurrence**Accept the cycle as permanent. Invest in containment — barriers, Iron Dome, intelligence networks — rather than resolution.

This is what Israel did from 2007 to 2023. The underground border barrier cost \$1.1 billion. Iron Dome intercepted thousands of rockets. Intelligence operations ran continuously. The containment model absorbed enormous resources — financial, military, and political — and it held, more or less, for sixteen years.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas breached every layer of that model and we, sadly, know what happened when they did.

The containment strategy failed because containment is a wager that the contained actor never innovates — and Hamas spent sixteen years innovating.

Managed recurrence is the implicit current policy, rebranded as pragmatism. It is what the Board of Peace's \$17 billion buys — another cycle, another interim, another set of assurances. The Carnegie Endowment concluded the Board lacks capacity, accountability, and durability. Anyone with more than a single brain cell concludes likewise. That said, the Board does not need any of those things.

Its function is to give the international community a vehicle for performing reconstruction while the reconstruction-to-rearmament pipeline runs underneath.

This is the option every major institution will choose — because it is the option that requires no choice at all. It is also the option with a perfect record of producing the next war.

The “day after” conversation treats reconstruction as an endpoint — a post-war recovery that, properly managed, leads to stability.

Five cycles of evidence say otherwise.

Reconstruction in Gaza is not recovery. It is ignition.

The materials rebuild the tunnels. The institutions feed the loop. The security guarantees do not exist. The monitoring frameworks measure what they can and miss what matters.

And the one variable that could break the cycle — organized resettlement, backed by a century of precedent — is something that no international body, no donor conference, and no “day after” plan will discuss.

Every option that works is unacceptable. Every option that’s acceptable does not work.

The international community will choose managed recurrence — the familiar, the comfortable, the funded. It requires only a pledge, a monitoring framework, and a press conference. It will produce the next October 7. Because the model is designed to produce exactly that, and no one has redesigned it.

The operational window to contest Hamas’s structural re-embedding in Gaza is closing while every senior decision-maker watches Iran.

The residents of Netiv HaAsara and Kfar Aza — the ones monitoring events from their living rooms because official assurances of Hamas’s collapse stopped being credible — understand what the donor conferences, the pledging frameworks, and the stabilization proposals refuse to say.

The reconstruction is already underway. The armed operatives are already directing traffic. The 15% fee is already being collected. The tunnels are already being refurbished.

And somewhere in a conference room, someone is drafting the terms of the sixth reconstruction mechanism — the one that will work this time, they are sure, if only the monitoring is better and the pledges are larger and the will is stronger.

It has never worked. It will not work.

The question is not whether the model fails. The question is what the silence around the one option with a historical record of success costs — and who pays when the next cycle completes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Uriel Zehavi

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR · MITZPE INSTITUTE

Uriel Zehavi is the executive director of Mitzpe Institute, where he writes the daily Israel Brief and co-directs its Institutional Intelligence practice with Modi Zehavi. He is the author of four books from Mitzpe Press and advises Israeli and allied clients on strategic communications for Western audiences.



ABOUT MITZPE INSTITUTE

Mitzpe Institute is an intelligence and strategy organization focused on Israeli security, diaspora threat assessment, and the strategic challenges confronting the Jewish people and the West. We produce daily intelligence, forensic analyses, strategic assessments, and tactical briefings read by policymakers, military leaders, and institutional decision-makers across more than 90 countries and all 50 US states — from the Knesset and the US Congress to allied governments, major policy institutions, and Jewish organizational leadership worldwide.

PASSED ALONG TO YOU?

The daily Israel Brief is free at mitzpe.org. The operational layer — Closed Dossiers, Vantage, and Watchwords — is members-only. Become a member, gift a membership, or book a briefing at mitzpe.org.

Reader Edition · Free to share with attribution to Mitzpe Institute.