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Position Paper

Israel's Center-Right and Leftist Parties Have Always Supported Displacing Gaza's Palestinians

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Introduction

During his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on February 4, US President Donald Trump announced a plan to displace the residents of the Gaza Strip to other countries, such as Egypt and Jordan, and rebuild the enclave to become the "Riviera of the Middle East" under American control. This was his solution to the crisis in Gaza, which in his opinion has become unlivable.¹

In Israel, the governing coalition parties were openly receptive to Trump's plan, even celebratory, as they view Trump's announcement as a historic opportunity to implement their plans to displace the population of Gaza. Opposition parties considered on the center-right of the political map, did not oppose the proposal.² On the left, Yair Golan's The Democrats Party—formed in July 2024 from the merger of the Labor and Meretz parties (the latter considered itself a left-wing Zionist party)—sees Trump's plan as unrealistic, but did not reject it on principle. It is important to note that Meretz was a symbol of the Zionist far-left in Israel that supported the two-state solution and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

This paper argues that the positions of the center-right and leftist Zionist parties toward President Trump's proposal are a direct continuation of their support of the genocidal war on Gaza and the desire for tribal revenge after October 7, 2023. Since the Hamas attack, these parties, which historically never rejected the idea of Palestinian displacement, have adopted more hostile attitudes toward the Palestinian people in general and toward the residents of Gaza in particular.

Israel Welcomes the Trump Plan

The Israeli media saw the Trump-Netanyahu meeting in early February as extremely important and anticipated that it would affect the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, the fate of the Gaza Strip, and perhaps the fate of the entire region. No one wanted to predict the conclave's outcome because of the history of tension between the two men and Trump's unpredictability.³ In fact, the Oval Office meeting turned into a clear announcement by the US president to displace the residents of the Gaza Strip, with the American leader giving legitimacy to right-wing displacement projects in Israel. Israeli society in general, and the Israeli right and Prime Minister Netanyahu in particular, celebrated Trump's remarks, viewing them as a historic shift in US policies toward the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As journalist Barak Ravid wrote, "The Trump plan created a feeling among the Israeli leadership that all its problems had been resolved, especially regarding the day after the war in Gaza. There is a sense of euphoria among members of the government."⁴

Israel's acceptance of Trump's plan was not limited to far-right currents and parties, but extended to the opposition, which includes parties that define themselves as center-right and left-wing Zionist formations. State Camp Party leader Benny Gantz welcomed Trump's Gaza project, saying it provided "creative, original and interesting thinking, which must be examined along with achieving the goals of the war, and prioritizing the repatriation of all abductees."⁵ Opposition leader Yair Lapid also voiced support for the plan, saying that the joint Trump-Netanyahu press conference was "good for the State of Israel."⁶

Golan of the Democrats Party responded somewhat differently and at length, expressing concerns that Trump's plan was unworkable, but not rejecting it on moral grounds. As Golan wrote on X.com on February 5, "Trump's statements are good for the headlines, but they are not practical on the ground."⁷ Golan also published an article in Haaretz explaining that Trump's plan was unrealistic and delusional, thus presenting an opposing stance. Writing in left-leaning Haaretz, Golan argued that

I can understand, of course, especially after October 7, that there are those who do not belong to the messianic movement or do not support the extremist government, and yet they listened to Donald Trump and thought that if they could go to sleep and wake up to find that the Palestinian people had disappeared, they would not object. But hope is not a plan of action and daydreaming that makes problems disappear with a flick of a magician's fingers has never been a Zionist tactic. Although we are a movement with dreams, we always plant our feet on the ground and always have a realistic and workable plan... The idea of displacement is incompatible with Judaism and Zionism [...] Anyone who considers himself a Zionist must oppose this project and stand against it so that it does not become legitimate and natural in the Israeli discourse. This is not the first time Trump has put forward a proposal that amazes everyone who hears it, and it will not be the last time an idea like this has been put back in the drawer—that, at best, is where it belongs.⁸

It is true that Golan, unlike Lapid and Gantz, did not see the plan as worth contemplating or as good for Israel. But his opposition derived from considerations of profit and loss calculations and a view that the plan is unworkable and harmful and detracts from the main goals facing Israel: securing the return of prisoners and abductees, finding an alternative to Hamas rule in Gaza, and dealing with the "extremist Arab axis."

Criticism of the Positions of the Center-right and the Zionist Left Parties

While Trump's plan was very well received by politicians, media figures, and intellectuals in the Israeli mainstream, some media and academic figures criticized it. For example,

historian Alexander Jacobson, in an article in Haaretz, considered the position of the "centrist" parties to be a political and moral failure, writing,

It must be said, unfortunately, that the centrist parties were being tested in this case [the Trump project], and their reaction was a political and moral failure. It is difficult, of course, for centrist leaders to reject the so-called "gift" given to Israel by the US president, but this is no ordinary case. Israel has been wrongfully and repeatedly accused of seeking to carry out the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, but when it comes to actual and de facto ethnic cleansing, there cannot be any tolerance. Trump's words are not "creative thinking" as Benny Gantz put it, and the Trump-Netanyahu press conference was not "good for Israel" as Yair Lapid said.⁹

Journalist Michael Brizon (known as B. Michael), also writing in Haaretz, accused these parties of long ago wanting to implement a transfer plan for the Palestinians. Brizon wrote,

The fools are, as usual, represented by Benny Gantz, who admired Trump's 'original and creative thinking.' The entire coalition, even some of those who call themselves the opposition, almost half of the population, groups of rabbis, and all the promoters and journalists in the media, have all been meditating and eager to implement the transfer plan for many years. Trump is the last impersonator of this despicable "idea." In fact, you have to be Gantz to understand the originality and/or creativity of the White House idiot.¹⁰

Gore Megiddo, a journalist for Haaretz, wrote that Trump's plan is perverted and contrary to international law, but he was not surprised by the positions of the opposition parties. He criticized them, saying, "Yesterday, Donald Trump came up with a crazy, sick, perverted, and unworkable idea that, by any legal definition, constitutes a crime against humanity of historic proportions: he will forcibly expel the residents of Gaza, and he will build on the ruins of their homes the Riviera of the world's richest people, under American ownership."¹¹

According to Megiddo, the question is,

What about the reaction of those sent to the Knesset by Israel, supposedly moderate, sensible, and liberal? For Benny Gantz, hesitation seems to be a long-standing state. He has no real convictions, and such events confuse him. For Yair Lapid, the main goal is how not to disturb. He always seeks to please public opinion rather than try to influence it. In this way, Lapid in turn contributes to the collective drift of an entire country.¹²

Journalist Miron Rapoport argued,

It is perhaps more accurate to say that Trump's plan reflects the deeper currents in Jewish society. No one was surprised that the fascist religious right treated the White House press conference as a divine revelation. But it was unexpected—and perhaps it was entirely expected with hindsight—that Benny Gantz would say that Trump's displacement plan represented "creative, original, and interesting" thinking, that Yair Lapid would claim that the press conference at which the plan was presented was "good for Israel," and that Yair Golan, the leader of the Zionist left, would say only that the plan was impractical. It was as if all the politicians from the Zionist parties were waiting for the moment when this transfer would receive the Made in America stamp in order for it to be adopted.¹³

How To Understand the Opposition's Positions?

Despite the clarity of the aims and the apparent seriousness of Trump's proposal,¹⁴ the fact that the center-right parties (but also the Democrats, who consider themselves the party of the "Zionist left") did not reject Trump's project was neither a coincidence nor the result of a tactical stance, nor was it surprising. Their position is the result of several factors.

First, their position reflects the ideological convictions that were formed prior to the events of October 7, 2023. These beliefs have become more legitimate because these parties have adopted more hostile positions toward the Palestinian people in general and the residents of Gaza in particular. They also are affected by the extreme right-wing populist atmosphere that currently dominates Israeli society and by the desire for collective revenge against the Palestinians.

Second, calls within Israeli society and among decision-makers for the displacement of the residents of the Gaza Strip increased immediately after the Hamas attack. The center-right and Zionist left parties did not reject these statements at the time, nor did they oppose the leaked plans developed by the Ministry of Intelligence to displace the residents of Gaza. Even a number of Knesset members and leaders of center-right parties announced positions in support of the displacement plans.¹⁵

Third, there is broad support in Israeli society for Trump's project, even though it is currently unrealistic and unimplementable. A poll conducted by the Jewish People Policy Institute, published on February 23, 2025,¹⁶ revealed that 52 percent of Jewish respondents support the plan and that 30 percent believe that it is not feasible but would like it to be. This means that over 80 percent of Israelis support Trump's plan. According to the Institute, the Trump plan for "the transfer of large numbers of Palestinian residents

from the Gaza Strip"—which many Israelis once considered illegitimate—now enjoys widespread support among Jewish Israelis. If it is rejected, it is mostly because the project is impractical, not because it is morally objectionable.

Fourth, dispossessing Gaza's residents is not new to Zionist ideology nor to the policies of Israeli governments. The so-called Zionist left and center-right parties that ruled Israel almost unilaterally until 1977 have historically not opposed displacement projects—in fact, they have initiated many of them.

Researcher Mahmoud Mhareb argues that the policies of displacing Palestinians have been in existence since the beginning of the Zionist project, continued by various means after the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967, and have resurfaced since the first day of the current war on Gaza.¹⁷ In a lengthy article in Haaretz, Shaul Arieli also explained that the ideology of displacement has been rooted in the Zionist project from the outset. Arieli writes,

While in the past Israeli public discourse tended to treat the idea of transfer as a product of political extremism, a historical review reveals a more complex picture. This idea has accompanied the Zionist movement from its beginnings, and has been an integral part of the strategic thinking of its leaders [...] Although the Zionist movement initially assumed that the Jewish majority in the Land of Israel would be achieved primarily through mass Jewish immigration, it never hesitated to study the possibility of creating a Jewish majority by moving part of the Arab population beyond the boundaries of what was supposed to be the Jewish national home.

Arieli continues, "The idea of transfer was not the preserve of 'extremists' alone. This idea was in a way supported by leaders from across the Zionist political spectrum, from members of Brit Shalom to members of the revisionist movement, and even so-called "moderates" who saw it as a legitimate solution."¹⁸

In an extensive article published a year before the Trump Gaza project was made public, Haaretz journalist Ofer Aderet reviewed the positions of early Israeli leaders and their support for displacement projects, including David Ben-Gurion and his comrades.¹⁹ Aderet quotes from Israeli historian Tom Segev's book *Days of the Anemones: Palestine During the Mandatory Period*: "Except for a few, there was no dispute that forced displacement was desirable for the Zionist movement and considered moral [...] This was indeed the Zionist dream at its core."

Aderet writes that

A review of Israeli government protocols from the sixties and seventies, considered left-wing and led by the Labor Party, reveals that prime ministers and ministers met several times to discuss the problem of the Palestinian population in Gaza and put forward ideas and projects that are not very different from the ideas of the extreme right today. The far-right's current ambition to

'encourage the emigration' of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip reflects only ideas and proposals previously put forward for discussion in the past by prime ministers, ministers, and leaders of left-wing governments belonging to the state's founding generation.²⁰

Historian Gadi Elgazi also explains that the efforts of "voluntary displacement" of the Gaza Strip

Have not stopped over the past many years, as the strangulation of the Gaza Strip through the blockade was nothing but a systematic means of forcing the population to forcibly migrate and leave the area. The ultimate goal is to complete Israel's previous attempts to empty the Gaza Strip of its Palestinian population, especially refugees, attempts that were partially successful between 1967 and 1973. Since October 2023, the project has entered its second phase: indiscriminate shelling, mass displacement during the war, and the systematic destruction of everything that can be destroyed. What the Trump plan says in essence is that the next phase will see further escalation, but this time under imperialist auspices.²¹

Conclusion

This paper has argued that the positions of the center-right parties and the so-called Zionist left toward Trump's plan to displace the population of Gaza are not surprising or haphazard and did not come out of nowhere. These parties failed to offer a position different from the voices that called for the displacement of the residents of Gaza immediately after the events of October 7, 2023. They now express more hostile public positions toward the Palestinians in general, and toward Palestinians in the Gaza Strip in particular.

Moreover, these parties' current positions cannot be understood without returning to their historical positions supporting, and sometimes initiating, projects to displace Palestinians. In fact, these ideas are widely accepted in the Israeli political system and widely supported in Israeli society. Center-right Zionist opposition parties are hiding behind Trump's proposed project to declare their support for the forced displacement plans of the residents of the Gaza Strip, after this was the exclusive position of far-right parties in recent years.

The position of these parties illustrates, once again, the profound and dangerous transformations that Israeli society, parties, and political leaders have been undergoing since October 7, 2023— a return to their historic affinity for the displacement project. Indeed, the desire for revenge is not exclusive to far-right currents in Israel; it is now common throughout Israeli Jewish society, and proposals to displace the residents of the Gaza Strip are not limited to right-wing and far-right parties; they are now acceptable to the majority.

Endnotes

1. "Trump publishes an American plan to control Gaza and disposes its residents," [Arab48](#), February 5, 2025 (Arabic); Ben Samuels and Liza Rozofsky, "Trump in a joint press conference with Netanyahu: the United States will take over Gaza and transform it into an international venue," [Haaretz](#), February 6, 2025 (Hebrew).
2. The two main centrist parties, Yesh Atid and State Camp, hold political positions usually adhere to traditional rightist parties positions in Israel, especially regarding the occupation, settlements, and the peace process. They oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories occupied in 1967, support a unified Jerusalem as Israel's capital, reject the Palestinians' right of return, and support maintaining large settlement blocs. Yesh Atid's Yair Lapid said in a press interview: "We are a centrist party that veers a little to the right." See "Personalities in Israeli Politics: Yair Lapid," [Mada al-Carmel](#), May 2013 (Arabic).
3. Tal Shalev and Barak Ravid, "Exchange deal, Saudi Arabia, and Iran: all you need to know about the 'second chance' meeting between Trump and Netanyahu," [Walla](#), February 4, 2025 (Hebrew).
4. Barak Ravid, "Optimistic about Trump: Netanyahu sees a great Gaza opportunity for his government in Trump's maneuvers," [Walla](#), February 12, 2025 (Hebrew).
5. Noa Shpigel, "Smotrich salutes trump; Gantz says Trump's proposal is interesting," [Haaretz](#), February 25, 2025 (Hebrew).
6. Ibid.
7. Yair Golan, [X.com](#), February 5, 2025 (Hebrew).
8. Yair Golan, "Transfer is not in our vocabulary," [Haaretz](#), February 9, 2025 (Hebrew).
9. Alexander Jacobson, "The Israeli center's response to Trump's idea regarding the transfer—a political and moral failure," [Haaretz](#), February 10, 2025 (Hebrew).
10. Brizon Michael, "The fools and the Nazis are the only ones enthusiastic about Trump's displacement plan," [Haaretz](#), February 11, 2025 (Hebrew).
11. Gore Megiddo, "Trump is talking about a crime against humanity...Gantz and Lapid express no surprise," [Haaretz](#), February 6, 2025 (Hebrew).
12. Ibid.
13. Miron Rapoport, "Even if Trump's plan doesn't move forward, the damage has been done," [Sihah Mekomit](#), February 5, 2025 (Hebrew).
14. [Haaretz](#) editor Aluf Benn thought that Trump's plan reflects Rabbi Kahane's racist discourse of the early 1980s about dispossessing Palestinians. Aluf Benn, "Don't underestimate them: Trump, Netanyahu, and Katz realize Kahane's legacy," [Haaretz](#), February 9, 2025 (Hebrew).

15. See, for example, Amitai Gazit, "The intelligence minister's proposal: transfer of Gaza residents to Sinai," [Calcalist](#), October 24, 2023 (Hebrew) and Itamar Aichner, "Voluntary emigration initiative of Knesset members Danny Danon and Ram Ben-Brak: the world will welcome Palestinian refugees," [Ynet](#), October 14, 2023 (Hebrew).
16. "February Index of Israeli Society: Less confidence in victory and worry about social polarization," [The Jewish People Policy Institute](#), February 23, 2025 (Hebrew).
17. Mahmoud Mhareb, "Case Analysis: War and Palestinian dispossession from Gaza," [The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies](#), March 19, 2024 (Arabic).
18. Shaul Arieli, "The solution is Eretz Israel without the Arabs: a century of support for the transfer," [Haaretz](#), February 12, 2025 (Hebrew).
19. Ofer Aderet, "'We have to take them by the neck and expel them:' the founding generation also demanded dispossessing Gazans," [Haaretz](#), December 3, 2024 (Hebrew).
20. Ibid.
21. Gadi Elgazi, "Dispossession and Reconstruction in Gaza: Netanyahu and Trump," [Sihah Mekomit](#), February 16, 2025 (Hebrew).



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