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Overview and Outlook

U.S.-Israel Military Cooperation and Congressional Debate

The United States and Israel (see **Appendix A** for a map of and basic facts about Israel) have cooperated closely for decades, reflecting assessments across several presidential Administrations and Congresses that the countries share a number of strategic interests, including countering threats from other regional states and militant groups.¹ Large-scale U.S. military assistance and other legislative action since the 1970s have helped Israel develop conventional military capabilities—including with advanced fighter aircraft, munitions, and missile defense systems—and industrial capacities that have bolstered its advantages against Middle Eastern adversaries such as Iran and groups that Iran supports.²

Bilateral agreements and legislation have formalized various aspects of U.S. defense cooperation with Israel. A 10-year bilateral military aid memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed in 2016 commits the United States to provide Israel \$3.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and to spend \$500 million annually on joint missile defense programs from FY2019 to FY2028, subject to congressional appropriations. The MOU anticipates possible supplemental missile defense funding in exceptional situations such as conflict.³

Since the mid-2010s, debate within Congress has intensified regarding various aspects of U.S.-Israel military cooperation. Some Members have cited provisions of U.S. and international law in efforts to halt or delay certain arms sales to Israel, or have supported conditioning or reducing U.S. aid to Israel⁴—largely in connection with their criticism of Israeli policies regarding Palestinians in the West Bank⁵ and Gaza Strip. Other lawmakers have defended Israel’s actions and advocated for continued or expanded U.S. military support.⁶

Confronting Iran and Its Allies After October 2023

The October 7, 2023, attacks against Israel, led by the Iran-backed Palestinian militant group Hamas (a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization, or FTO) apparently caught Israeli leaders by surprise. Israel’s counterattack in Gaza and subsequent actions in Lebanon, Syria, and Iran marked a series of military operations and statements reflecting Israeli leaders’ apparent determination to eliminate threats or potential threats from various Iran-supported adversaries to their territory and population by

- degrading threats near Israel’s borders, including by targeting Israel’s adversaries’ leaders and infrastructure in those areas;

¹ See, for example, Dennis Ross, *Doomed to Succeed: The U.S.-Israel Relationship from Truman to Obama*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015; Bamo Nouri and Inderjeet Parmar, “Why the US and Israel’s Alliance Endures—Even When It Strains,” *The Conversation*, April 15, 2016.

² Jonathan Masters and Will Mellow, “U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts,” Council on Foreign Relations, October 7, 2025.

³ Text of MOU at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/265160.pdf>.

⁴ Chris Van Hollen, “The Hard Truth My Party Needs to Face,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2026.

⁵ The U.S. Board on Geographic Names and Department of State refer to the territory as the West Bank. See <https://fam.state.gov/FAM/05FAH03/05FAH030410.html>. Some U.S. lawmakers and some Israelis refer to the territory as “Judea and Samaria,” the biblical names for the region. Recognizing Judea and Samaria Act (S. 384 and H.R. 902); Ephrat Livni, “U.S. Evangelicals Press for Annexation of West Bank,” *New York Times*, March 10, 2025.

⁶ H.Rept. 119-631 (House Appropriations Committee) accompanying National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 2027 (H.R. 8595).

- deploying the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) at forward positions to maintain buffer zones beyond those borders in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria; and
- conducting direct, assertive military operations against Iran in close coordination with the United States.

During the two decades prior to 2023, Israel had generally sought to deter and contain external threats without sustained commitments of the Israel Defense Forces outside Israel. This period was marked by IDF withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005, and numerous limited or covert military actions against Iran and its allies.⁷

Since October 2023, polls indicate that Israeli decisions to initiate military action against Iran and its key allies Hamas and Lebanese Hezbollah (another FTO) have received majority support among Israel's population.⁸ Before the resolution of Gaza's hostage situation in late 2025, Israeli public opinion had been divided over whether the two-year war in Gaza was increasing or decreasing prospects for a safe return of Israeli hostages.⁹ Since then, some Israeli domestic public debate regarding the costs of expanded, multi-front military action has focused on the toll it takes on Israel's fighting capacity, economy, and popular morale,¹⁰ while also exacerbating a preexisting political dispute over the extent to which religious exemptions to Israel's military draft should continue.¹¹ An April 2026 poll reportedly indicated that 57% of Israelis polled thought Israel had not achieved victory on any front since October 2023.¹² Nevertheless, another survey signals that majority opinion in Israel apparently supports the continued maintenance of buffer zones beyond Israel's borders.¹³

In March 2026, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israel's "security concept" now features IDF control over "zones deep within enemy territory" in eastern Gaza, southern Lebanon, and southern Syria.¹⁴ After Hamas and other Palestinian militants killed more than 1,200 people and took 251 hostages on October 7, 2023, Israeli forces have reportedly killed over 73,000 Palestinians (comprising both militants and civilians) in Gaza.¹⁵ Most of Gaza's 2.1

⁷ Prior to October 2023, the only standing IDF deployments outside of Israel's internationally recognized borders (dating from 1948) were in the West Bank and the Golan Heights, which were seized by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and are home to thousands of Israeli citizens whose settlements have generated major international legal and political controversy.

⁸ Israel Democracy Institute, "Jewish Israelis Overwhelmingly Support Continued Fighting Against Hezbollah in Lebanon," April 13, 2026; Stav Levaton, "Poll: Most Jewish Israelis Support Iran War, Toppling Regime; Arab Backing Far Lower," *Times of Israel*, March 4, 2026; Israel Democracy Institute, "Flash Survey: Israelis Support Immediate Negotiations to Release the Hostages While Fighting Continues," November 10, 2023.

⁹ See, for example, Israel Democracy Institute, "Two Years Since Oct. 7: Majority of Israelis Say the Time Has Come to End the War," September 30, 2025.

¹⁰ Stav Levaton and Ariela Karmel, "Zamir Said to Warn Cabinet That IDF Will 'Collapse in On Itself' amid Manpower Shortage," *Times of Israel*, March 27, 2026; Shoshanna Solomon, "War, and More War. Israelis Support Defeating Iran, But They Are Exhausted," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 17, 2026. One Israeli poll signaled that around 50% of Israelis believed the events of the last three years had at least a fairly large negative impact on their mental health, and around 45% believed that these events had at least a fairly large negative impact on their financial situation. Israel Democracy Institute, "Israeli Voice Index—March 2026," March 22-26, 2026, <https://en.idi.org.il/media/30641/israeli-voice-index-march-2026-eng-data.pdf>.

¹¹ Israel Policy Forum, "The Haredi Exemption" (accessed June 25, 2026).

¹² Mohammed Sio, "57% of Israelis Say Israel Has Not Won Any War Since October 2023: Poll," Anadolu Agency, April 28, 2026.

¹³ "Most Israelis Say Security Must Precede Territorial Withdrawal and That Buffer Zones Are Vital for Defense," Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs, June 22, 2026.

¹⁴ Israeli Prime Minister's Office, "Statement by PM Netanyahu at IDF Northern Command," March 29, 2026.

¹⁵ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), Reported impact snapshot | Gaza Strip (24 (continued...))

million people have been displaced multiple times, with many facing acute problems relating to hunger, disease, and overcrowding.¹⁶ Additionally, more than one million residents in Lebanon have been internally displaced by conflict in 2026, and some towns in southern Lebanon have reportedly been largely destroyed.¹⁷ Since 2025, the IDF has also increased its presence in the West Bank amid ongoing controversies over the entrenchment and expansion of Israeli settlements, the viability of limited self-rule by the Palestinian Authority (PA), and violence involving Israeli settlers, Palestinian militants (including some backed by Iran), and Israeli and PA security forces.

Regional Security Implications: Iran and Its Allies, Abraham Accords, and Turkey

Since October 2023, Israel has scored major operational successes against the arsenals, leadership cadres, and battle readiness of Iran and its “axis of resistance.” The December 2024 fall of former Syrian president Bashar al Asad (alt. Assad), an Iran ally, also greatly reduced Iran’s ability to use Syria as a transport hub and host country for weapons and forces.¹⁸ Shortly after Asad’s ouster, Israel launched ground and air operations in Syria to capture some territory in southern Syria and destroy Syrian military assets.¹⁹ One objective of Israeli attacks on Iran in early 2026—carried out jointly with U.S. forces—was apparently to so weaken Iran’s Islamic Republic that it would no longer be able to marshal a credible threat to Israel, or provide continuing material support to its regional allies.²⁰ Other Israeli aims, including regime change in Iran, have not been achieved.²¹ An Israeli journalist has written, “In relative terms, Israel has beaten its enemies on every front. Unfortunately, the Jewish state has failed to secure long-term diplomatic results that would allow it to switch from constant fighting to only partial fighting.”²²

Since 2023, Israeli military achievements appear to have altered the regional balance of power.²³ Analysts inside and outside Israel have debated whether and how these tactical advances might affect longer term security scenarios.²⁴ Factors may include whether Israel will (1) continue to act militarily against Iran-linked actors with the assertiveness it has demonstrated since October 2023, and/or (2) resume some aspects of the deterrence-based approach it employed before then,

June 2026), with Palestinian casualty figures based on information from the Hamas-run Gaza Ministry of Health; Jasmine Baehr, “Netanyahu, on 2-year mark of Oct. 7 Hamas terror attack, says Israel ‘not broken,’ vows to bring hostages home,” Fox News, October 7, 2025.

¹⁶ UN-OCHA, Reported impact snapshot | Gaza Strip (24 June 2026).

¹⁷ “Truce brings no relief for displaced from Lebanon's destroyed, occupied towns,” Reuters, June 25, 2026.

¹⁸ Beatrice Farhat, “Syria foils major arms smuggling attempt to Lebanon: What we know,” *Al-Monitor*, December 17, 2025.

¹⁹ Lauren Frayer and Jawad Rizkillah, “Syria’s dictator is gone. Its civil war is over. But Israel keeps attacking,” NPR, April 10, 2025.

²⁰ Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, “Prime Minister Netanyahu’s Remarks at the JNS International Policy Summit 2026,” June 22, 2026.

²¹ “Israel’s open-ended wars have eroded its security,” *Economist*, April 21, 2026.

²² Yonah Jeremy Bob, “Israel beats enemies on multiple fronts but risks diplomatic setbacks – analysis,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 9, 2026.

²³ Raphael BenLevi, “Israel in 2026: A New Consensus on Security,” *Jerusalem Strategic Tribune*, January 2026.

²⁴ Tamir Hayman, “Achieving the War’s Objectives and Improving Israel’s Long-Term Security: Recommended Policy for Ending the War with a Victory,” Institute for National Security Studies (Israel), June 9, 2025; International Crisis Group, *Flashpoint/Israel/Palestine: Israel*, May 7, 2026, Zineb Riboua, “How Israel’s Victory Strengthens America’s Hand,” November 20, 2025.

perhaps partly owing to apparent limits on Israeli military reserve capacity and material resources.

Presumed Israeli Nuclear Capability

Israel is not a party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and maintains a policy of “nuclear opacity” or *amimut*. One 2022 report estimated that Israel possesses a nuclear arsenal of around 90 warheads.²⁵ The United States has apparently countenanced Israel’s nuclear ambiguity since 1969, when Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and U.S. President Richard Nixon reportedly reached an accord whereby both sides agreed never to acknowledge Israel’s nuclear arsenal in public.²⁶ Israel might have nuclear weapons deployable via aircraft, submarine, and ground-based missiles.²⁷ No other Middle Eastern country is generally thought to possess nuclear weapons.

Abraham Accords and Arab states. Israel’s relations with other U.S. regional partners could be one factor that affects Israel’s future defense posture. Before the October 2023 attacks, the Abraham Accords and subsequent diplomacy had brought Israel and various Arab countries (including Saudi Arabia) closer together on various aspects of security, political, and economic relations.²⁸ Since then, multiple Muslim-majority countries have denounced Israeli military actions in Gaza, Lebanon, and elsewhere, asserting that these actions have caused suffering among civilian populations and violated other countries’ sovereignty, as well as criticizing Israeli actions and statements that oppose Palestinian statehood.²⁹ At least some Arab Gulf states may harbor latent concerns that greater Israeli power projection could undermine rather than buttress regional stability.³⁰ A September 2025 Israeli strike in Qatar targeting Hamas leaders apparently was a factor that influenced the United States to work with Israel, Qatar, other key Arab states, Turkey, Indonesia, and Pakistan on diplomacy aimed at halting Israel-Hamas fighting in Gaza.³¹

The 2026 conflict in Iran, with its many implications for regional security and global commerce, could reshape relations between Israel and other U.S. partners in the Middle East—perhaps partly depending on Israel’s willingness to integrate these U.S. partners’ security concerns into its decision-making. Some analysts observed during the conflict that Israeli actions appeared less constrained than those of the United States and its Arab Gulf partners by the potential for retaliatory attacks on Gulf infrastructure, Iranian internal instability, and disruptions to the energy trade.³² Arab Gulf states may also have few near-term alternatives to coordinating defensive action with the United States and Israel, possibly providing Israel with some leverage to seek closer political and economic ties.

After President Trump called on several Muslim-majority countries to join the Abraham Accords in connection with May 2026 U.S.-Iran diplomacy, none indicated an immediate willingness to do

²⁵ Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, “Nuclear Notebook: Israeli nuclear weapons, 2022,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January 17, 2022.
²⁶ Eli Lake, “Secret U.S.-Israel Nuclear Accord in Jeopardy,” *Washington Times*, May 6, 2009.
²⁷ Kristensen and Korda, “Nuclear Notebook: Israeli nuclear weapons, 2022.”
²⁸ Middle East Institute, “The Abraham Accords,” November 17, 2025.
²⁹ See, for example, Qatar News Agency, “Final Communique Issued by Arab-Islamic Emergency Summit in Doha,” September 15, 2025.
³⁰ Rashid Al-Mohanadi, “Gulf States Can Contain the Threat from Iran and Israel. But They’ll Need Help,” Chatham House, June 17, 2026.
³¹ Adam Rasgon et al., “‘A Big Day’: How the U.S. and the Arab World Teamed Up to Seal the Gaza Deal,” *New York Times*, October 14, 2025.
³² Natan Sachs, “If the Regime Survives: Iran War Raises the Ante for US, Israel,” Middle East Institute, March 17, 2026; Marc Lynch, “The United States Could Lose the Gulf,” *Foreign Policy*, March 5, 2026; Neri Zilber and James Shotter, “Israel expects weeks-long war against Iran,” *Financial Times*, March 4, 2026.

so.³³ Future Israeli discussions with these states on normalization or deeper relations may face uncertain prospects amid greater regional uncertainty. Statements from officials in Saudi Arabia have linked potential Saudi normalization with Israel to progress toward Palestinian statehood, which the current Israeli government has strongly opposed.³⁴ One Israeli analyst has said that Muslim-majority states are unlikely to consider moves toward the Abraham Accords “before the elections in Israel and before seeing what the deal with Iran yields.”³⁵ The United Arab Emirates (UAE), which helped initiate the Abraham Accords by normalizing its relations with Israel in 2020, has signaled an intention to deepen cooperation with Israel as part of an apparent strategy to act independently from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.³⁶ Reports indicate that during the Iran conflict, Israel sent various air defense weapons to the UAE, including an Iron Dome air defense battery and an Iron Beam laser system.³⁷

Turkey (Türkiye). Longtime disputes between Israel and Turkey (a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) over Palestinian issues appear to have the potential to grow into a larger regional rivalry. The war in Gaza exacerbated these bilateral differences over the impact of Israel’s actions on Gaza’s population and Turkey’s continued support for Hamas.³⁸ Since Sunni Islamist figures came to power in Syria in 2024, Israel has sought to counter Turkey’s growing influence with Syria’s government and a continued Turkish military presence in northern Syria, with some Israeli military operations reportedly undertaken to prevent Turkey’s transfer of major weapons systems to Syrian bases.³⁹ Israeli concerns about Turkey’s influence in Syria may also partly account for Israeli actions to take control of southern Syrian border areas and directly or indirectly support Syrian Druze and Kurdish minorities.

Israel-Turkey tensions, while generating heated rhetoric, may remain controllable in the near term because of some presumed shared interests. Both countries could stand to gain from a weakened Iran, and Turkey has reportedly continued to allow oil from Azerbaijan—estimated to comprise nearly half of Israel’s oil imports—to be shipped from a Turkish seaport, despite a formal Turkish suspension on goods trade with Israel due to the Gaza war.⁴⁰ One analyst has written that a decisive question for U.S. interests in the region will be whether Israel and Turkey—as two key military powers in the region potentially benefitting from an Iranian decline—might be able to “overcome their mutual suspicion” and “work out ways to coexist in the new Middle East that will emerge when the smoke has cleared.”⁴¹

³³ Matt Bradley, “Why U.S. allies aren’t taking Trump seriously after his push for Arab-Israel normalization,” NBC News, May 29, 2026.

³⁴ Vivian Nereim, “The Mideast Is Baffled by Trump’s Call to Expand Abraham Accords,” *New York Times*, May 28, 2026.

³⁵ Yoel Guzansky of the Institute for National Security Studies, quoted in Nereim, “The Mideast Is Baffled by Trump’s Call to Expand Abraham Accords.”

³⁶ Summer Said et al., “The U.A.E.’s OPEC Bombshell Signals a New Middle East Order,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 29, 2026.

³⁷ Neri Zilber and Andrew England, “Israel rushed laser system to UAE to fend off Iran’s missiles,” *Financial Times*, April 30, 2026; Barak Ravid, “Scoop: Israel sent ‘Iron Dome’ system and troops to UAE during Iran war,” *Axios*, April 26, 2026.

³⁸ CRS Report R44000, *Turkey (Türkiye): Major Issues and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas.

³⁹ Francesco Salesio Schiavi, “Why Syria’s T4 airbase could become a new flashpoint in Turkey and Israel’s rivalry,” *The New Arab*, April 8, 2025.

⁴⁰ “Israel’s imports of Azerbaijani oil via Turkey jump despite Ankara’s trade ban,” Reuters, January 21, 2026; “Iran threat to ‘enemy oil lines’ raises fear over Azerbaijan-Turkey pipeline supplying Israel,” *Middle East Eye*, March 3, 2026.

⁴¹ Svante Cornell, “Turkey on Iran: Gains, Risks, and Strategic Restraint,” Jewish Institute for National Security of America, March 30, 2026.

The Trump Administration's November 2025 National Security Strategy includes the following passage:

The key to successful relations with the Middle East is accepting the region, its leaders, and its nations as they are while working together on areas of common interest.

America will always have core interests in ensuring that Gulf energy supplies do not fall into the hands of an outright enemy, that the Strait of Hormuz remain open, that the Red Sea remain navigable, that the region not be an incubator or exporter of terror against American interests or the American homeland, and that Israel remain secure. We can and must address this threat ideologically and militarily without decades of fruitless "nation-building" wars. We also have a clear interest in expanding the Abraham Accords to more nations in the region and to other countries in the Muslim world.⁴²

International Views on Israel and Palestinian Statehood

Israel's military approach in the region since October 2023, particularly in Gaza, has further polarized international views on Israeli regional policy. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) found in January 2024 that it has jurisdiction over allegations by South Africa (later joined by some other countries) that Israel may have committed acts of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza; and at this time and during continuing deliberations the ICJ has ordered Israel to take or refrain from certain actions to prevent conditions that could harm Gaza's population.⁴³ A number of countries have expressed varying perspectives on the ICJ case via formal filings with the ICJ. Declarations to the ICJ that may be favorable to Israel tend to focus on context and legal standards that could frame Israeli actions contributing to civilian casualties and suffering as responsive to threats or potential threats, while appearing to acknowledge difficulties in avoiding non-combatant hardship in complex, crowded environments.⁴⁴ Declarations to the ICJ that may be critical of Israel generally allude to context and legal standards that could frame Israeli action as possibly disproportionate or intentionally punitive.⁴⁵

Also in 2024, the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for alleged crimes against humanity and alleged war crimes for Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant,⁴⁶ triggering strong denunciations from U.S. and Israeli leaders who insisted that the ICC has no jurisdiction in the matter (Israel and the United States are not members of the ICC).⁴⁷ Simultaneously, the ICC issued an arrest

⁴² See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-National-Security-Strategy.pdf>.

⁴³ ICJ case portal available at <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>; Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), Order 26 I 24 (January 26, 2024), p. 16 (finding jurisdiction pursuant to Article IX of the Genocide Convention), pp. 30-32 (indicating various provisional measures required of Israel); Order 28 III 2024 (March 28, 2024), pp. 528-529 (reaffirming previous provisional measures and indicating additional provisional measures required of Israel); Order 24 V 24 (May 24, 2024), pp. 665-666 (reaffirming previous provisional measures and indicating additional provisional measures required of Israel).

⁴⁴ See, for example, declarations of intervention by Hungary and Fiji at <https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/192-20260312-int-03-00-en.pdf> and <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20260312-int-04-00-en.pdf>.

⁴⁵ See, for example, declarations of intervention by Brazil and Spain at <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20250917-int-01-00-en.pdf> and <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240628-int-01-00-en.pdf>.

⁴⁶ ICC case portal available at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/palestine>; ICC, "Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I rejects the State of Israel's challenges to jurisdiction and issues warrants of arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant," November 21, 2024.

⁴⁷ "US Rejects ICC Arrest Warrants for Israeli Officials, White House Spokesperson Says," Reuters, November 21, 2024; Department of State (Biden Administration), "Warrant Applications by the International Criminal Court," May 20, 2024; Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Prime Minister's Office Statement," November 27, 2024.

warrant for alleged crimes against humanity and alleged war crimes against Hamas leader Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri (aka Mohammed Deif).⁴⁸ The Trump Administration imposed sanctions on various ICC officials in 2025,⁴⁹ in one statement saying its sanctions effort “aims to impose tangible and significant consequences on those directly engaged in the ICC’s transgressions against the United States and Israel.”⁵⁰

Israel and the West: Challenges to Relations and Palestinian Statehood Issue

Israel’s policies toward Gaza and the West Bank, and prospects for a Palestinian state, are factors in Israel’s relationships with the United States and several other Western countries. Since Israel’s capture of the territories in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the UN Security Council’s adoption of Resolution 242 and its “land-for-peace” framework later that year,⁵¹ some international policy and legal debates and (since the 1990s) rounds of U.S.-supported negotiations have centered around the circumstances under which Israel should or should not agree to Palestinian control and/or sovereignty in Gaza and the West Bank.⁵²

Distancing by some Western countries away from Israel, amid intense international debate over Israel’s actions after the October 2023 attacks, could have a wide-ranging impact on a number of issues important for U.S.-Israel relations. A number of countries have taken steps to limit arms trade with Israel or ties with its defense industry, particularly in connection with Israeli operations in Gaza (including Germany, France, the United Kingdom (UK), Italy, Canada, and Japan).⁵³ As various countries dispute the respective culpability of Israel, Hamas, and other actors for killings and crises in Israel, Gaza, and the broader region, some countries have discussed reducing economic and cultural cooperation with Israel.⁵⁴ In September 2025, the European Commission proposed that European Union countries suspend “certain trade-related provisions of the Association Agreement between the EU and Israel,” and place sanctions on “Hamas, extremist ministers and violent settlers.”⁵⁵ One media source commented, “On paper, the impact would be significant as the EU is Israel’s biggest trading partner.... But in reality the proposal has almost no chance of winning enough support from European governments to be implemented in the short term, or perhaps ever.”⁵⁶

⁴⁸ ICC, “Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I Issues Warrant of Arrest for Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri (Deif),” November 21, 2024. Subsequently, Deif was pronounced dead as a result of a previous Israeli military strike.

⁴⁹ Executive Order 14203 of February 6, 2025. Department of the Treasury, “Issuance of Executive Order Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court; International Criminal Court-related Designation,” February 13, 2025; Department of State, “Imposing Sanctions in Response to the ICC’s Illegitimate Actions Targeting the United States and Israel,” June 5, 2025; “Imposing Further Sanctions in Response to the ICC’s Ongoing Threat to Americans and Israelis,” August 20, 2025.

⁵⁰ Department of State, “Imposing Further Sanctions in Response to the ICC’s Ongoing Threat to Americans and Israelis,” August 20, 2025.

⁵¹ The first item of Resolution 242 affirmed “that the fulfilment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles: (i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict; (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.”

⁵² Kali Robinson, “What Is U.S. Policy on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?” Council on Foreign Relations, July 12, 2023.

⁵³ Alia Shoaib, “Map of Countries That Have Stopped Weapons Exports to Israel,” *Newsweek*, August 8, 2025.

⁵⁴ Lauren Kent, “From Diplomacy to Soccer, Israel Is Becoming a Pariah on the Global Stage,” CNN, September 28, 2025. In July 2024, the ICJ issued a non-binding advisory opinion finding, among other things, that “Israel’s continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory [constituting the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip] is unlawful.” ICJ, “Summary of the Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024.” In response, the Biden Administration State Department expressed concern about the breadth of the court’s opinion, and strongly discouraged parties from using the opinion “as a pretext for further unilateral actions that deepen divisions or for supplanting a negotiated two-state solution.” “US Criticizes ICJ Opinion on Israeli Occupation of Palestinian Territories,” Reuters, July 20, 2024.

⁵⁵ European Commission, “Commission Proposes Suspension of Trade Concessions with Israel and Sanctions on Extremist Ministers of the Israeli Government and Violent Settlers,” September 16, 2025.

⁵⁶ Tim Ross, “War in Gaza Exposes Europe’s Tortured Soul,” *Politico Europe*, September 17, 2025.

Also in September 2025, Western countries, including France, the UK, Canada, and Australia, announced their recognition of a Palestinian state.⁵⁷ These countries asserted that they were seeking to encourage an end to the war in Gaza and preserve the prospect of a two-state solution in which the Palestinian Authority—not Hamas—would exercise sovereignty in Gaza and the West Bank after enacting internal reform. Earlier that month, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution endorsing the “New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution” (with a vote of 142 in support, 10 in opposition, and 12 abstaining).⁵⁸ The Trump Administration opposed both the Declaration and the General Assembly resolution that endorsed it.⁵⁹ Members of Congress have varying views on recognizing Palestinian statehood. Some have petitioned other countries not to move forward with it;⁶⁰ some others support a resolution in favor of U.S. recognition (e.g., S.Res. 410).

Prime Minister Netanyahu responded to the moves to recognize Palestinian statehood by saying, “You are rewarding terror with an enormous prize.... It’s not going to happen. There will be no Palestinian state to the west of the Jordan River.... Moreover, we have doubled the Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria [West Bank], and we will continue on this path.”⁶¹ A year earlier (July 2024), the Knesset (Israel’s parliament) voted 68 to 9 to pass a non-binding declaration opposing the establishment of a Palestinian state.⁶²

Israeli 2026 Elections and Domestic Politics

Prime Minister Netanyahu (b. 1949) and his Likud party have led Israel almost continually since 2009, other than a brief period from 2021 to 2022 when Netanyahu was displaced by an opposition coalition led by Naftali Bennett (a right-of-center political figure and erstwhile Netanyahu ally) and Yair Lapid (a centrist figure and the current opposition leader).⁶³ Bennett, Lapid, and other leaders—including popular retired general Gadi Eisenkot—are set to challenge Netanyahu in elections to Israel’s Knesset (parliament) that are scheduled to take place no later than October 2026 (see profiles of main Israeli political parties and their leaders in **Appendix B**). Netanyahu or the Knesset could call for elections to take place as early as September. In April 2026, Bennett and Lapid announced that they would contest this year’s elections together in a new party known as Beyachad (Together). As of June, polls signal that Eisenkot’s Yashar (Upright) party could eclipse Beyachad as the top challenger to Netanyahu and Likud.⁶⁴ Opposition to Netanyahu from figures who share some of Netanyahu’s right-of-center political

⁵⁷ For background on international recognition of Palestinian statehood, see CRS Report RL34074, *The Palestinians: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti.

⁵⁸ UN document, A/80/L.1/Rev.1, adopted September 12, 2025. Before and after October 2023, the General Assembly has regularly adopted multiple resolutions by large margins each year that generally support the Palestinians’ views on self-determination and criticisms of Israel. The New York Declaration (available at <https://onu.delegfrance.org/new-york-declaration>) was agreed to at the UN High-level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, held from July 28 to 30, 2025, and co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia. Among other things, the declaration called for the “realization of an independent, sovereign, economically viable and democratic State of Palestine living side by side, in peace and security with Israel, thus enabling full regional integration and mutual recognition.” For more information, see <https://www.un.org/unispal/high-level-conference-two-state-solution-july2025/>.

⁵⁹ U.S. Mission to the UN, “Explanation of Vote on the UNGA Resolution Endorsing the New York Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution,” September 12, 2025.

⁶⁰ Text of September 19, 2025 letter from 25 Members of Congress at <https://files.constantcontact.com/81b76c35801/9888fb71-232f-4c60-863d-292731f12546.pdf?rdr=true>.

⁶¹ Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, “Statement by PM Netanyahu,” September 21, 2025.

⁶² The Knesset, “Knesset Plenum Votes in Favor of Declaration Stating That Parliament Opposes the Establishment of a Palestinian State,” July 18, 2024.

⁶³ Netanyahu also served as prime minister from 1996 to 1999.

⁶⁴ Mazal Mualem, “Can Political Novice Eisenkot Defeat Netanyahu in Upcoming Elections?” *Al-Monitor*, June 20, 2026.

views increased after various corruption allegations emerged against Netanyahu in the late 2010s—he was indicted in 2019 for fraud, breach of trust, and accepting a bribe, and his criminal trial remains ongoing.⁶⁵

Netanyahu’s current government (see **Table 1**), which took office in late 2022, features two ultra-nationalist figures who openly support Israeli annexation of at least some West Bank areas: Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir. Some observers have argued that Smotrich’s and Ben Gvir’s views are influential on Palestinian issues because Netanyahu may depend on their support to preserve his coalition.⁶⁶ Smotrich has a second position within the defense ministry that has allowed him to quicken the pace of Israeli settlement planning and construction in the West Bank, and he has taken corresponding actions aimed at further legitimizing Israeli civilian control in the West Bank at the expense of the Palestinian Authority.⁶⁷ Ben Gvir has used his control over Israel’s police and other internal security to make appointments to key positions that seemingly diminish checks on extremist settlers in the West Bank, and increasingly permit Jewish prayer at Jerusalem’s Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif—despite Israel’s formal commitment to a “status quo” dating to at least the 19th century intended to prevent non-Muslim worship there.⁶⁸

Table 1. Israeli Government: Key Positions

Position	Name	Party
Prime Minister	Benjamin Netanyahu	Likud
Defense Minister	Israel Katz	Likud
Foreign Minister	Gideon Sa’ar	Likud
Finance Minister and Minister Within Defense Ministry	Bezalel Smotrich	Religious Zionism
Deputy Prime Minister and Justice and Interior Minister	Yariv Levin	Likud
National Security Minister	Itamar Ben Gvir	Jewish Power
Transportation Minister	Miri Regev	Likud
Energy Minister	Eli Cohen	Likud
Agriculture and Rural Development Minister	Avi Dichter	Likud

Based on polling to date, it is unclear whether parties supporting Netanyahu or those opposing him may be likely to garner the necessary Knesset majority to form a government.⁶⁹ The Bennett-Lapid coalition of 2021-2022 relied on support from the United Arab List (alt. Ra’am). Bennett and Lapid have signaled that they may not be willing to reprise such a partnership after the next election,⁷⁰ though any such inclination may be less relevant if Eisenkot outperforms them.

If neither Netanyahu nor parties currently opposing him can form a new government after an election, the following are two possibilities for government formation:

⁶⁵ Jeremy Sharon, “Netanyahu Wraps Up Trial Testimony After 98 Hearings Across 18 Months,” *Times of Israel*, June 24, 2026.

⁶⁶ Gershom Gorenberg, “The Two Extremists Driving Israel’s Policy,” *The Atlantic*, May 30, 2025; Neri Zilber, “The Extremists Driving Netanyahu’s Approach to War with Hamas,” *Financial Times*, February 19, 2024.

⁶⁷ See, for example, Anat Peled, “Israel Assumes Broad New Powers in the West Bank,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 9, 2026.

⁶⁸ “The Far Right Has Captured Israel’s Police,” *Economist*, July 18, 2024. For more information on the “status quo” arrangement, see CRS Report RL33476, *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti.

⁶⁹ “Will Binyamin Netanyahu Hold on to Power?” *Economist*, updated July 2, 2026.

⁷⁰ Rina Bassist, “Can Bennett, Lapid Unite Israel’s Opposition to Unseat Netanyahu?” *Al-Monitor*, May 2, 2026.

- **Broader coalition** featuring Netanyahu's Likud and one or more of the opposition parties, some of which (as mentioned above) share right-of-center positions with Likud but have opposed Netanyahu probably at least partly due to the criminal charges against him; or
- **Caretaker government** led by Netanyahu while the country would likely prepare for another round of elections in early 2027. Netanyahu previously led successive caretaker governments for over a year (during 2019-2020), in connection with stalemates on forming a coalition after elections in April and September 2019.

In November 2025, Prime Minister Netanyahu applied to Israeli President Isaac Herzog for a pardon from his criminal case. During Israel's history, presidential pardons have generally occurred after trial convictions, though Israel's supreme court permitted a case of pre-trial pardons in the 1980s as an exceptional situation.⁷¹ President Donald Trump has repeatedly advocated for Netanyahu's pardon, arguing that the trial—which could continue into 2027 or beyond (before any possible appeals)—distracts Netanyahu and Israel from focusing on critical matters for Israel's national security and cooperation with the United States.⁷² According to some reports, Israeli President Herzog may seek first to help mediate a plea deal before considering a pardon.⁷³

Polls indicate high levels of Jewish Israeli public support for decisions to pursue military action—most recently in Iran and Lebanon.⁷⁴ A subsequent survey in May 2026 showed a decline in “satisfaction with the military achievements in Iran,” and 49% of Israelis polled agreed that Israel “will not win or has already lost” the campaign against Iran, while 41% “believe that Israel has [won] or will win in Iran.”⁷⁵ One poll taken after the mid-June U.S.-Iran MOU found that more than 80% of Israelis polled believe the conflict weakened Israel's long-term security, and more than 56% rate Prime Minister Netanyahu's management of the conflict as “failed” or “poor.”⁷⁶ Candidates opposing Netanyahu have criticized aspects of his post-October 2023 military approach to the region and argued that Netanyahu and other government leaders have fallen short in achieving promised objectives.⁷⁷ Additionally, the following issues continue to generate domestic debate in Israel as scheduled elections draw near.

Ultra-orthodox (Haredi) conscription. For several years, Israeli lawmakers have vigorously disputed whether to conscript young Haredi men. Under a longtime informal government arrangement, these men had generally been exempted from the military service required of most other young Jewish Israelis, on the basis of their involvement in religious studies. Pursuant to a 2024 Israeli supreme court ruling that invalidated the general exemption, the government has issued draft notices to thousands of young Haredi men—who are growing fast as a percentage of

⁷¹ Dana Blander, “The Authority of the President of the State of Israel to Issue Pardons,” Israel Democracy Institute, November 19, 2025.

⁷² Barak Ravid, “Trump Claims Netanyahu Pardon Would Make Israeli President ‘National Hero,’” Axios, April 29, 2026.

⁷³ Isabel Kershner, “Israel's President to Push for Netanyahu Plea Deal,” *New York Times*, April 27, 2026.

⁷⁴ Israeli Democracy Institute, “Overwhelming Majority of Jews (93%); Minority of Arabs (26%) Support Operation in Iran (total sample: 82%),” March 4, 2026; “Jewish Israelis Overwhelmingly Support Continued Fighting Against Hezbollah in Lebanon,” April 13, 2026.

⁷⁵ Mora Deitch, “Findings of the National Security Survey: May 2026,” Institute for National Security Studies (Israel), May 27, 2026.

⁷⁶ “Poll: 92% of Israelis Believe Iran Emerged As Winner After War and Deal with US,” *Times of Israel*/Agence France Presse, June 21, 2026.

⁷⁷ “Israelis Angry over U.S.-Iran Peace Deal Lash Out at Netanyahu,” Associated Press, June 15, 2026; Tal Schneider and David Horovitz, “Bennett to ToI: ‘We’re at an Existential Moment. Another Four Years with This Government, We Won’t Have a Society,’” *Times of Israel*, June 14, 2026.

the country's population.⁷⁸ Reports suggest that around 5% of Haredim have complied with the draft, and the current government has generally refrained from enforcing it.⁷⁹ In April 2026, the supreme court ordered the state to take concrete steps to revoke financial benefits from those evading conscription.⁸⁰ The government, which has relied on support from the Knesset's two Haredi parties, sought during the current Knesset session to advance a bill with an exemption that appeared to be calibrated to satisfy these parties. Some opponents of the bill, including a number of Knesset members from Prime Minister Netanyahu's Likud party, argued that the exemption would be too broad, given the burdens of military service borne by other sectors of the country's population over the past three years.⁸¹ A February 2026 poll indicated that 32% of Israelis supported the bill and 54% opposed it.⁸²

With prospects for that bill uncertain, the government is seeking to enact another bill as a Basic Law that would designate Jewish religious study (specifically, Torah study) as a "significant service" to the state, and possibly have legal and financial implications for Haredi conscription requirements or exemptions.⁸³ Key figures opposing Prime Minister Netanyahu have denounced the bill, and Israeli Knesset legal advisers and the attorney general's office have argued it raises "fundamental constitutional questions."⁸⁴

Domestic inquiry into October 7 attacks. To date, Netanyahu's government has resisted the establishment of a state commission of inquiry into the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led attacks. Past commissions, each appointed by the supreme court president, looked into aspects of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the 1982 Lebanon war. To review elements of the 2006 Lebanon war, the then-serving government appointed a committee that was approved by Israel's attorney general.⁸⁵ Netanyahu announced in November 2025 that his government would appoint the members of an October 7 inquiry panel. Israel's attorney general has filed a petition opposing this action with the supreme court, arguing that a state commission of inquiry is "the only investigative framework capable of examining the full scope of political, military, and intelligence failures" that may have occurred.⁸⁶ A January 2026 poll indicated that 55% of Israelis supported a state commission of inquiry headed by a judge, and 22% supported a government-appointed committee.⁸⁷

Proposed judicial system changes. The government proposed a number of major changes to the judicial system in 2023, including making judicial appointments more directly subject to the

⁷⁸ For information on the demographic breakdown and future projections, see Israel Democracy Institute, "Haredim in Israel 2050: Demographic Projections and Economic and Security Scenarios," February 10, 2026.

⁷⁹ "The Haredi Draft Dodging Farce to Continue Until We Who Pay the Price Say 'Enough!'—Editorial," *Jerusalem Post*, October 29, 2025; Charlie Summers, "Police Blocking Army from Arresting Draft Dodgers in Haredi Areas, IDF Says," *Times of Israel*, February 2, 2026.

⁸⁰ Sarah Ben-Nun, "Israel High Court Demands Government Enforce Draft Law, Revoke Benefits from Evaders," *Jerusalem Post*, April 26, 2026.

⁸¹ Shlomit Ravitsky Tur-Paz, "The Rise and Fall of the (Non-)Conscription Law—Explainer," Israel Democracy Institute, March 12, 2026.

⁸² Jewish People Policy Institute, "JPPI Israeli Society Index for February 2026," February 12, 2026.

⁸³ Pesach Benson, "Knesset Advances Bill Recognizing Torah Study as National Value amid Coalition Split," Press Service of Israel, June 10, 2026. For information on Basic Laws, see <https://main.knesset.gov.il/en/activity/pages/basiclaws.aspx>.

⁸⁴ Ariela Karmel, "Contentious Basic Law on Torah Study, Aimed at Shielding Draft Evaders, Passes 1st Reading," *Times of Israel*, July 2, 2026.

⁸⁵ Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Inquiry Committee Regarding the Campaign in the North," September 11, 2006.

⁸⁶ Sarah Ben-Nun, "Attorney-General: Govt Refusal of Oct. 7 Inquiry Is Harming Truth-Finding and Accountability," *Jerusalem Post*, January 19, 2026.

⁸⁷ Israel Democracy Institute, "Large Majority of Jewish Israelis Think Israel Is Safer Than Abroad; Arab Israelis More Divided on Where Is Safest," January 6, 2026.

government's control, and giving the Knesset power to override decisions from Israel's supreme court. These proposals triggered considerable domestic controversy—including public protests and counterprotests—over the extent to which an elected government and simple Knesset majority should be able to institute such changes without broader institutional support.⁸⁸ In 2024, the supreme court invalidated a law that the Knesset had enacted to limit judges' ability to overturn government actions.⁸⁹ In 2025, the Knesset amended the law on judicial appointments (with the change to take effect in the next Knesset) to replace bar association members on the committee that selects judges with political appointees; this amendment is under supreme court review.⁹⁰ Some government leaders have subsequently sought to pursue additional changes. In 2025, the supreme court—in response to petitions by the main opposition party and a civil society group—overturned an effort by the government to fire Israel's attorney general without consulting a nonpartisan professional committee.⁹¹ While the attorney general controversy is not part of the government's legislative agenda, it may have related implications for the future in Israel of apolitical expertise and checks on government action.

Key Strategic Areas for U.S.-Israel Relations

Iran

Since Prime Minister Netanyahu returned to power in 2009, he and other Israeli officials have sought to influence U.S. and international policy on Iran, while also trying to increase Israel's military capabilities to counter or deter Iran and its regional allies. For much of that time, U.S. leaders largely employed coercive diplomacy—backed by economic sanctions and threats of force—in efforts to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Israeli officials have generally sought to convince U.S. counterparts to adopt broader objectives, to encompass ending Iran's uranium enrichment program and degrading its missile arsenal and production capacity, as well as reducing Iran's support for armed groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Gaza, and Yemen.⁹²

After the October 2023 attacks on Israel, the scope of regional conflict expanded to include direct exchanges of fire between Israel and Iran for the first time. The United States and other partners assisted Israel with air defense. In two relatively brief conflicts in 2024, Israel reportedly caused considerable damage to Iranian air defenses. Then, during what has been termed a “12-day war” in June 2025, Israel and the United States apparently dealt a major setback to Iran's nuclear program with coordinated strikes against key sites at Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan. Israel also targeted several Iranian military, government, and nuclear program-related facilities and officials.⁹³

2026 conflict. At the start of the 2026 U.S.-Israel conflict with Iran on February 28, President Trump pledged to ensure that Iran could not obtain nuclear weapons, while also expressing an

⁸⁸ CRS Insight IN12214, *Israel: Controversy over Judicial System Changes and Proposals*, by Jim Zanotti.

⁸⁹ Ruth Levush, *Israel: High Court Overturns Legislative Elimination of the Reasonableness Doctrine*, Law Library of Congress, August 2025.

⁹⁰ Sarah Ben-Nun, “High Court Presses State over Judicial Selection Overhaul, Warns of Political Incentives,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 21, 2026.

⁹¹ David Isaac, “Israeli High Court Cancels Government's Decision to Fire Attorney General,” *Jerusalem News Syndicate*, December 14, 2025.

⁹² Israeli Prime Minister's Office, “Prime Minister's Office Announcement,” February 8, 2026; Rina Bassist, “As US-Iran Talks Set to Begin, Israel Struggles to Shape Trump's Options,” *Al-Monitor*, February 5, 2026.

⁹³ For more details and sourcing from this section, see CRS In Focus IF13032, *Israel-Iran Conflict, U.S. Strikes, and Ceasefire*, by Clayton Thomas and Jim Zanotti.

intention to destroy Iran’s missiles, missile industry, and navy, and to prevent Iranian “proxies” from destabilizing the region or attacking U.S. forces.⁹⁴ In a March 10 letter to the UN Security Council, U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN Michael Waltz said that the United States was taking “necessary and proportionate actions” against Iran “in exercise of the inherent right of self-defense as reflected in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations,” and “in close cooperation with, and in the collective self-defense of, Israel.”⁹⁵ During the conflict, in coordination with U.S. counterparts, Israel’s military struck a range of targets in Iran aimed at dismantling the regime’s security infrastructure and impairing its industrial capacity.⁹⁶

Israeli leaders have expressed support for regime change in Iran. Early in the conflict, Prime Minister Netanyahu repeatedly called on the Iranian people to rise up and topple the Islamic Republic.⁹⁷ Israel reportedly carried out strikes that killed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and several other high-level Iranian leaders, including key regime figure and national security advisor Ali Larijani. As the conflict continued, Israel appeared to adjust its messaging on regime change, perhaps reflecting reported Israeli intelligence assessments that an Iranian domestic uprising—if one occurs—could take place over a longer timeframe or at some point after U.S.-Israel military operations cease.⁹⁸ A former Israeli intelligence official has assessed that Israel would welcome any type of domestic instability within Iran—be it a coup, renewed protests, or a civil war—and that Israel may be less concerned than the United States about broader implications of such instability for Iran’s future and the security balance for various regional partners.⁹⁹ In a May interview, Netanyahu said that, before jointly launching military operations against Iran, he and President Trump agreed that toppling Iran’s regime faced uncertain prospects. Netanyahu also stated that “nobody had perfect foresight” regarding potential disruptions to commerce transiting the Strait of Hormuz.¹⁰⁰

Various sources have speculated on how Israel’s apparent support for changing or weakening Iran’s regime may have influenced Trump Administration positions.¹⁰¹ In President Trump’s February 28 speech, he said to the Iranian people, “When we are finished, take over your government. It will be yours to take. This will be probably your only chance for generations.”¹⁰² One media report citing unnamed sources (including two U.S. officials) stated that President Trump rejected a March suggestion by Prime Minister Netanyahu for the two of them to publicly call on the Iranian people to take to the streets, with Trump pointing to risks that regime forces could violently suppress any domestic protests, as had happened in January.¹⁰³ President Trump

⁹⁴ “Read Trump’s Full Statement on Iran Attacks,” Associated Press, February 28, 2026.

⁹⁵ UN Security Council, Letter dated 10 March 2026 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, March 11, 2026.

⁹⁶ CRS Report R48887, *U.S. Conflict with Iran*, coordinated by Clayton Thomas.

⁹⁷ Anat Peled, “Netanyahu Urges Iranians to Rise Up,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 28, 2026; Prime Minister of Israel (@IsraeliPM), X post, March 10, 2026, 3:27 PM, <https://x.com/IsraeliPM/status/2031452019861459240>.

⁹⁸ Mark Mazzetti et al., “Israel Planned to Ignite Mass Uprising in Iran, But It Failed to Emerge,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2026; Nava Freiberg, “Israeli Ministers, Security Officials Reportedly Say Iranian Regime Collapse Could Take a Year, amid ‘Fog’ over War’s Length,” *Times of Israel*, March 10, 2026.

⁹⁹ Danny Citrinowicz, quoted in Neri Zilber and James Shotter, “Israel Expects Weeks-Long War Against Iran,” *Financial Times*, March 4, 2026.

¹⁰⁰ Major Garrett, “Netanyahu Wants Israel ‘to Draw Down to Zero the American Financial Support,’” CBS News, May 10, 2026.

¹⁰¹ Neri Zilber, “How Benjamin Netanyahu’s Big Moment Backfired,” *Financial Times*, June 22, 2026; Daniel C. Kurtzer and Aaron David Miller, “The Problem with the Idea That Netanyahu Made Trump Attack Iran,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 23, 2026.

¹⁰² “Read Trump’s Full Statement on Iran Attacks,” Associated Press.

¹⁰³ Barak Ravid and Marc Caputo, “‘They’ll Get Mowed Down’: Trump Rebuffed Netanyahu Idea to Call for Iran Uprising,” *Axios*, March 25, 2026.

has argued that the killing of Khamenei and other key Iranian leaders during the conflict has effectively amounted to regime change.¹⁰⁴

Iranian retaliatory strikes against Israel represent the fourth time since 2024 that Iran has directly fired missiles and drones at Israeli targets, though in the 2026 conflict Iran’s regime—facing a potentially existential threat—has also fired at other countries, including Arab Gulf states and Turkey. As in the previous conflicts, U.S. and Israeli air defenses reportedly intercepted most of the Iranian projectiles deemed to endanger civilians or important infrastructure in Israel.¹⁰⁵ Some missiles and drones, however, evaded these defenses and caused casualties or damage, including an instance near Israel’s main nuclear research facility and reactor in Dimona.¹⁰⁶ Iran’s use of cluster munitions in the 2026 conflict has complicated the defense effort, as has the firing of additional projectiles at Israel from Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen. Some open sources have reported concerns about potential scarcity of U.S.-funded interceptors for some U.S. or Israeli missile defense systems.¹⁰⁷ One media article, reportedly citing Department of Defense¹⁰⁸ assessments, stated that the U.S. military expended “far more high-end munitions defending Israel amid hostilities with Iran than Israeli forces used themselves.”¹⁰⁹ Public discussion has continued regarding options to boost interceptor production and find more efficient and/or lower-cost means of countering missile and drone threats.¹¹⁰

Conflict diplomacy and some U.S.-Israel divergence. On April 7, 2026, the United States and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire and to negotiating a more durable end of conflict—with Israel reportedly not a direct participant in the U.S.-Iran talks. The ceasefire was then extended indefinitely, though it was punctuated by some outbreaks of fighting. On June 7, Iran carried out ballistic missile strikes on Israel following an escalation of fire between Lebanese Hezbollah and Israel.¹¹¹ After the Iranian strikes, President Trump reportedly urged Prime Minister Netanyahu to use restraint in responding, but Israel went forward with airstrikes in Iran, triggering some tit-for-tat exchanges on June 8.¹¹² President Trump said that after receiving messages from Iran indicating a willingness to resume the ceasefire, Israel called off further military action after he told Netanyahu “you better be careful, or you will be on your own very soon.”¹¹³ In an interview later that day, Vice President J.D. Vance said:

The Israelis and the United States, we have a lot of shared interests, but we also have some situations where our interests diverge.... the United States’ main objective in Iran is to ensure that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon.... the president believes – and I think that

¹⁰⁴ Chad de Guzman, “Trump Seems to Embrace ‘Regime Change’ in Iran, Saying U.S. Already Achieved It by Killing Leader,” *Time*, April 1, 2026.

¹⁰⁵ “Israel Not Short of Missile Interceptors, Insists Chair of Rafael Defense Firm,” *Times of Israel/Reuters*, May 11, 2026.

¹⁰⁶ Nicholas Kulish, “Interceptor Missiles Save Lives, but Stockpiles Are Dwindling,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2026.

¹⁰⁷ Macdonald Amoah et al., “Over 11,000 Munitions in 16 Days of the Iran War: ‘Command of the Reload’ Governs Endurance,” Royal United Services Institute, March 24, 2026.

¹⁰⁸ The Department is “using a secondary Department of War designation,” under Executive Order 14347 dated September 5, 2025.

¹⁰⁹ John Hudson, “U.S. Bears Brunt of Israel’s Missile Defense, Pentagon Assessments Show,” *Washington Post*, May 21, 2026.

¹¹⁰ Anat Peled, “Israel Is Rationing Its Best Interceptors—and Iran’s Missiles Are Getting Through,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 2026; Oren Dori, “Israel to Step Up Production of Arrow Interceptor Missiles,” *Globes*, April 6, 2026; Michael Brown, “The First AI War: How the Iran Conflict Is Reshaping Warfare,” *Forbes*, March 30, 2026.

¹¹¹ Barak Ravid, “Trump Calls On Israel and Iran to ‘Immediately Stop Shooting’ As Ceasefire Frays,” *Axios*, June 8, 2026.

¹¹² Ben Caspit, “‘We Are Already Hearing the Bus’: Israeli Insiders Fear Netanyahu Is Losing Trump’s Backing on Iran,” *Al-Monitor*, June 9, 2026.

¹¹³ Barak Ravid, “Behind the Scenes: How Israel and Iran Nearly Pulled Trump Back to War,” *Axios*, June 9, 2026.

he's right – that we can get the long-term settlement to Iran's nuclear deal. Now, Israel may like that, they may not like that. But fundamentally, we think this is in the best interest of the United States of America.¹¹⁴

One former U.S. official, surveying the situation, stated, “Trump’s priority is to re-open the Strait of Hormuz to stabilize global energy markets and bring down the price of fuel, and Netanyahu wants to continue degrading Iran’s ballistic missile arsenal and nuclear program.”¹¹⁵ On June 11, Prime Minister Netanyahu’s office released the following statement: “Even though Israel is not a party to the memorandum of understanding, the Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for President Trump’s commitment that the final agreement at the conclusion of negotiations will include the removal of enriched material, the dismantling of enrichment infrastructure, limits on missile production, and the cessation of Iran’s support for its terrorist proxies in the region.”¹¹⁶

In mid-June 2026, the United States and Iran signed an MOU to end “military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon,” act to facilitate commerce via the Strait of Hormuz, take steps that could provide Iran with some financial relief, and begin a 60-day negotiating period on related issues that include Iran’s nuclear program. The MOU also states that Iran and the United States “undertake to respect each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and to refrain from interfering in each other’s internal affairs.”¹¹⁷ Prior to the signing, Netanyahu emphasized that Israel was not a party to the U.S.-Iran deal, and that he was “not limiting” himself in acting to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon or countering Hezbollah in Lebanon.¹¹⁸ Despite the Israeli demands to include Iran’s missile program and support for proxy militias in any deal, neither issue was mentioned in the MOU, and resolution on the nuclear issue remains uncertain.¹¹⁹ An unnamed former senior Israeli official labeled the diplomatic outcome to date a “strategic disaster,” saying that the situation is worse than before the conflict, especially since “we’re not in lockstep with the US as before.”¹²⁰

Lebanon

In early March 2026, shortly after the U.S./Israel-Iran conflict began, Lebanese Hezbollah started firing projectiles into northern Israel, prompting large-scale Israeli military operations in Lebanon. In previous fighting between October 2023 and November 2024, Israel exacted major losses on Hezbollah, after which Israel maintained some positions across the Lebanese border and conducted airstrikes in Lebanon in parallel with a debate over ceasefire compliance involving Israel, Hezbollah, the Lebanese government, and international stakeholders including the United States, France, and the United Nations. In March 2026, the Lebanese government took the unprecedented step of banning Hezbollah’s military activities, though the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) chief’s reported inability and/or unwillingness to enforce the decree has sparked political contention within Lebanon.¹²¹ The disarmament of Hezbollah, an Israeli demand and the stated

¹¹⁴ Nora Moriarty, “VP JD Vance Addresses US-Israel Relationship, Whether Iran Is Trying to ‘Play’ the United States,” Fox News, June 8, 2026.

¹¹⁵ Rachel Brandenburg, quoted in Matthew Shea, “Experts Warn Trump’s Attempts to Restrain Israel Undermine Leverage in Iran Talks,” *Jewish Insider*, June 9, 2026.

¹¹⁶ Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, “Prime Minister’s Office Announcement,” June 11, 2026.

¹¹⁷ Text of MOU at <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=0000019e-db5d-d1ed-a59f-ff5da65a0000>.

¹¹⁸ Nava Frieberg and Lazar Berman, “Netanyahu Avoids Criticizing US-Iran Deal, Claims War’s Main Goals Have Been Achieved,” *Times of Israel*, June 16, 2026.

¹¹⁹ Zilber, “How Benjamin Netanyahu’s Big Moment Backfired.”

¹²⁰ Zilber, “How Benjamin Netanyahu’s Big Moment Backfired.”

¹²¹ Adam Chamseddine, “Lebanon’s Prime Minister Mulls Sacking Army Chief Over Hezbollah Disagreements,” *Middle East Eye*, March 11, 2026.

goal of the Lebanese government, represents a potential key element to resolution of conflict, but Hezbollah remains entrenched in parts of Lebanon and may be more capable in some respects than the LAF.¹²²

Early 2026 Israeli operations in Lebanon (which reportedly displaced around a million people, or about 20 percent of the country's population) have sought to reduce the ability of Iran and its allies to threaten Israel from Lebanese territory. Israeli objectives have apparently included the creation of a larger buffer zone in southern Lebanon to reduce Hezbollah threats to Israel (see **Figure 1**), and the exertion of pressure on Lebanon's government and military to marginalize Hezbollah—both politically and militarily—and disrupt the group's sources of weapons and funding. The history of Israeli involvement in Lebanon over several decades suggests that any short-term gains for Israeli security could engender popular domestic resistance over the longer term to a prolonged Israeli presence in Lebanon and/or any Lebanese political decisions deemed to be driven by Israeli demands. In March, Prime Minister Netanyahu identified preventing cross-border anti-tank fire from Hezbollah as a specific aim.¹²³ Israel also has targeted Iranian officials in Lebanon.¹²⁴ Reports indicate that Hezbollah drones, including some featuring fiber optic cables resistant to electronic countermeasures, present security challenges for Israeli troops in southern Lebanon, and have also targeted areas of Israel within a few miles over the border.¹²⁵

The long-term effect of the 2026 conflict on civilian populations in Israel and Lebanon is unclear. Unlike in October 2023, to date Israel has not ordered the evacuation of potentially at-risk residents living near its border with Lebanon, though some displacement has reportedly occurred.¹²⁶ Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said in March that the IDF was planning to establish a security zone in southern Lebanon, including by destroying villages near the Israeli border “in accordance with the Rafah and Beit Hanoun model in Gaza.”¹²⁷

After the U.S.-Iran ceasefire was announced on April 7, Israel differed publicly with Iran on whether the ceasefire included Lebanon. After reported U.S. efforts to halt the fighting in Lebanon, President Trump announced on April 16 that the Israeli and Lebanese governments had agreed to pause hostilities for 10 days, a period that was later nominally extended until late June. Despite the ceasefire, which did not require Israel to withdraw from its forward positions in Lebanese territory, Israel and Hezbollah later resumed some fighting, including Israeli strikes on targets around Beirut.¹²⁸

In April, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said, “But ultimately, the answer, both sides agree, is a Lebanese Armed Forces with the capability to go after and disarm and dismantle Hizballah inside of their country. And that's what we're working towards establishing, is a system that actually works where vetted units within the Lebanese Armed Forces have the training, the equipment,

¹²² Orna Mizrahi and Moran Levanoni, “The Lebanese Army—The Challenge for Israel Given the Gap Between Vision and Reality,” Institute for National Security Studies (Israel), March 15, 2026.

¹²³ Israeli Prime Minister's Office, “Statement by PM Netanyahu at IDF Northern Command,” March 29, 2026.

¹²⁴ Barak Ravid, “Scoop: Dozens of IRGC Members Flee Lebanon, Israeli Officials Say,” Axios, March 5, 2026.

¹²⁵ Inon Shalom Yttach, “Hezbollah Launches Largest Drone Swarm Attack on Israel's Northern Border,” i24News, May 13, 2026; Isabel Kershner et al., “Slyer Drones Give Hezbollah an Edge over Israel,” *New York Times*, May 3, 2026; Lazar Berman, “Hunted by Drones It Should Have Seen Coming, Israel Now Sees Its Lebanon Strategy at Risk,” *Times of Israel*, May 4, 2026.

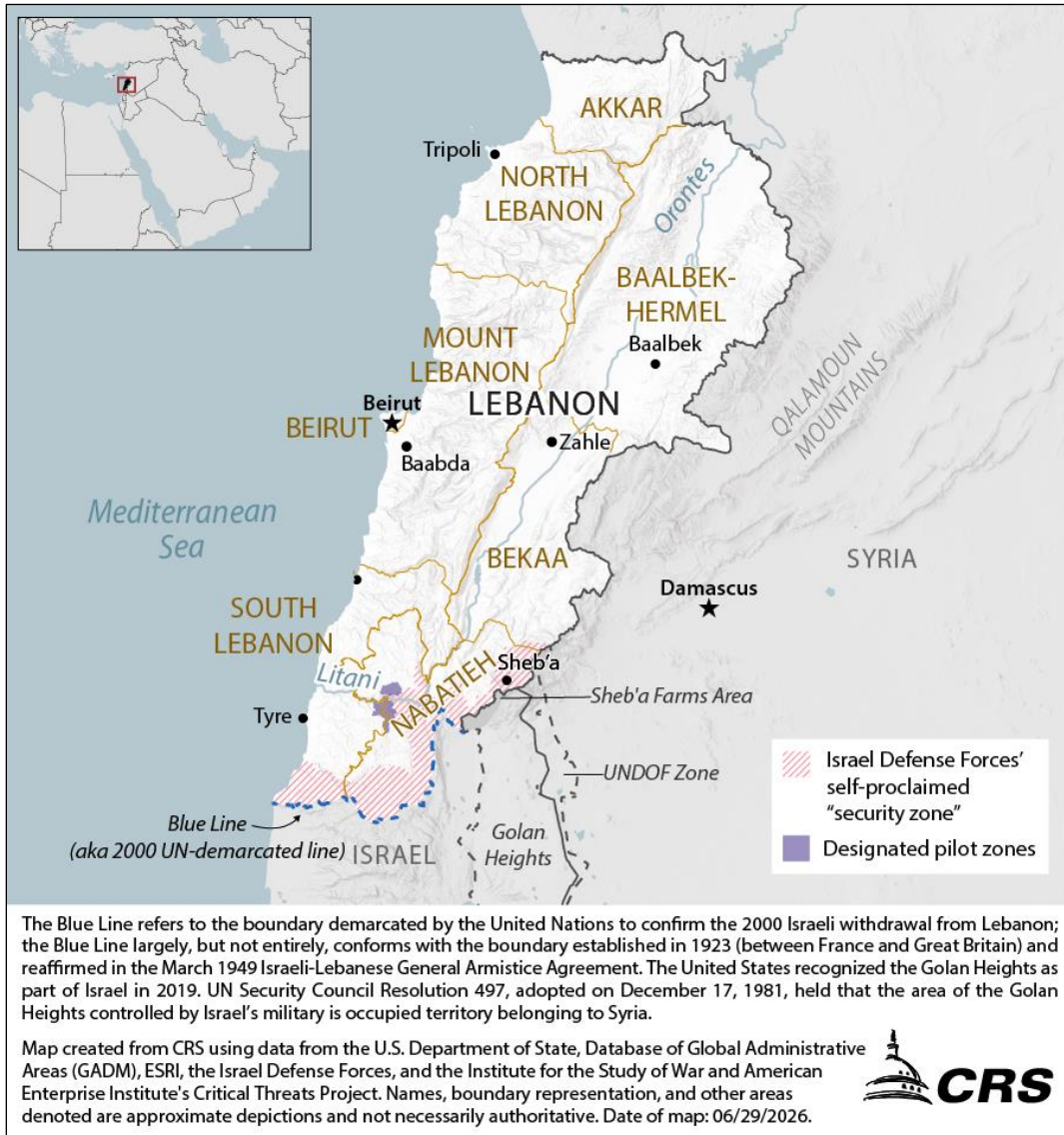
¹²⁶ Abdi Latif Dahir, “In New War with Israel, Hezbollah Defies Notion That It Was Crippled,” *New York Times*, April 11, 2016.

¹²⁷ Stav Levaton, “Katz Says Israel Will Demolish Lebanon Border Villages, Create Gaza-Style Buffer Zone,” *Times of Israel*, March 31, 2026.

¹²⁸ Barak Ravid, “Trump Tells Netanyahu Only ‘Surgical’ Lebanon Strikes as Ceasefire Falter,” Axios, April 29, 2026; Euan Ward, “Israel Says It Killed a Hezbollah Chief Near Beirut, Testing the Truce,” *New York Times*, May 7, 2026.

and the capability to go after elements of Hizballah and dismantle them so Israel doesn't have to do it."¹²⁹ In early June, the United States, Israel, and Lebanon jointly announced a ceasefire “contingent on a complete cessation of Hizbollah fire and the evacuation of all Hizbollah operatives from the South Litani Sector.” The announcement also anticipated the creation of “pilot zones,” where the LAF would presumably seek to establish exclusive control over certain southern Lebanon areas.¹³⁰ Reportedly, Hezbollah and Iran indicated that they rejected the terms of any such deal unless Israel were to fully withdraw from Lebanon.¹³¹

Figure I. Lebanon: Pilot Zones and Israeli Military Positions



The June 2026 U.S.-Iran MOU calls for “the immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon” and “ensuring the territorial integrity and

¹²⁹ Department of State, “Secretary of State Marco Rubio with Trey Yingst of Fox News Channel,” April 27, 2026.
¹³⁰ Department of State, “Joint Statement of the United States of America, Republic of Lebanon, and State of Israel on the Latest High-Level Trilateral Meeting,” June 3, 2026.
¹³¹ “Iran Declares Support for Hezbollah with Wider Peace Deal in Doubt,” Reuters, June 5, 2026.

sovereignty of Lebanon.”¹³² The United States and Iran reportedly agreed in their first post-MOU talks to create a “de-confliction cell ... to ensure the adherence of the termination of military operations in Lebanon as per the MoU.”¹³³ Some Israel-Hezbollah fighting has taken place after the MOU was signed. On June 22, Prime Minister Netanyahu stated, “Our fighters in southern Lebanon have full freedom of action to thwart any direct or developing threat to them or to the residents of the North.... My stance is firm on our remaining in the security zone in southern Lebanon for as long as is required in order to protect the residents of the North and all citizens of the state.”¹³⁴ An unnamed senior Israeli political source was cited as saying that if the United States pressures Israel to withdraw from Lebanon, Netanyahu “won’t be able to defend such a move to his Likud base and right-wing voters on the eve of elections.”¹³⁵

On June 26, the United States, Israel, and Lebanon agreed to a “trilateral framework” by which Israel and Lebanon pledged to work toward peace with each other through a gradual effort to have the LAF gain control in areas upon confirmation that Hezbollah has been disarmed and had its infrastructure dismantled. Israel and Lebanon designated two initial pilot zones (see **Figure 1**) and agreed to designate future zones by mutual consent. The framework agreement stated that Lebanon “welcomes the readiness of the United States to support such efforts, recognizing that any new U.S. assistance [for the LAF] will be strictly conditioned on verifiable milestones, full transparency, demonstrated results, and ongoing oversight.”¹³⁶

Gaza

In October 2025, a ceasefire brokered by the United States, Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey took effect between Israel and Hamas.¹³⁷ The deal appeared intended to facilitate the eventual implementation of a broader 20-point plan regarding Gaza’s future put forth by President Trump in September,¹³⁸ and endorsed by Israel and some other regional countries (but not Hamas to date). In November 2025, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2803, which endorsed the 20-point plan in its entirety and called for its implementation. The resolution also authorized a transitional authority for Gaza and international civil and security presences until the end of 2027 (see **Figure 2**).

In January 2026, U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff announced the “launch of Phase Two of the President’s 20-Point Plan to End the Gaza Conflict.... Phase Two establishes a transitional technocratic Palestinian administration in Gaza ... and begins the full demilitarization and reconstruction of Gaza, primarily the disarmament of all unauthorized personnel.”¹³⁹

¹³² Text of MOU at <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=0000019e-db5d-d1ed-a59f-ff5da65a0000>.

¹³³ Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Joint Statement by the State of Qatar and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Regarding the Conclusion of the Lake Lucerne Summit, First High-Level Committee Meeting with Participation of the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran,” June 22, 2026.

¹³⁴ Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, “Statement by PM Netanyahu,” June 22, 2026.

¹³⁵ Ben Caspit, “How Netanyahu Used Lebanon Strikes to Push Back on Trump’s Iran Deal,” *Al-Monitor*, June 19, 2026.

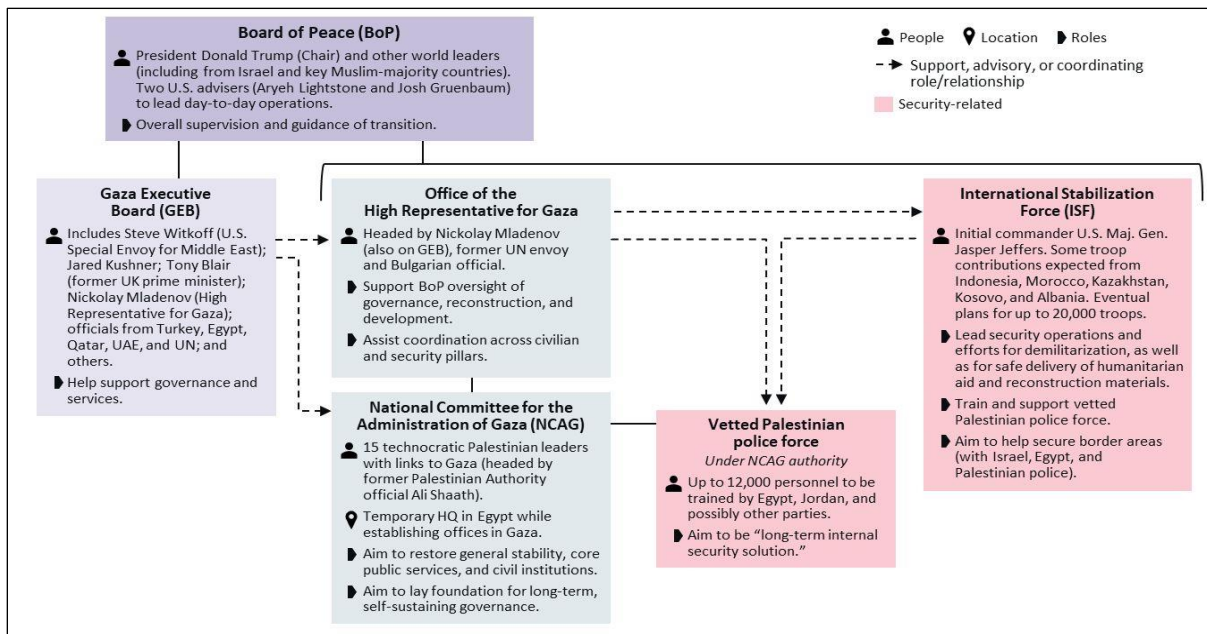
¹³⁶ Department of State, “Trilateral Framework Between the United States of America, the State of Israel, and the Republic of Lebanon,” June 26, 2026.

¹³⁷ The *Times of Israel* published a purported text of the ceasefire deal at <https://www.timesofisrael.com/full-text-of-oct-9-israel-hamas-deal-on-trumps-plan-for-comprehensive-end-to-gaza-war/>.

¹³⁸ Text of the plan available at The American Presidency Project (hosted by the University of California, Santa Barbara), “White House Press Release—President Donald J. Trump’s Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict,” September 29, 2025.

¹³⁹ X, Special Envoy Steve Witkoff (@SEPeaceMissions), January 14, 2026, 11:39 AM, <https://x.com/SEPeaceMissions/status/2011478211075391845>.

Figure 2. Gaza Transition: Key Entities



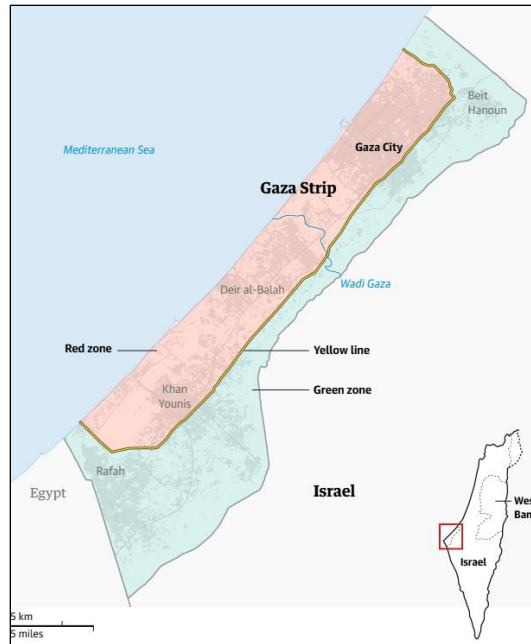
Sources and Notes: Depiction is approximate, based on CRS analysis of various open sources, mainly: White House, “Statement on President Trump’s Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict,” January 16, 2026; X, The White House (@WhiteHouse), January 22, 2026 – 9:07 AM, <https://x.com/WhiteHouse/status/2014339243221434783>; and UN Security Council Resolution 2803, November 17, 2025 (including Annex 1: President Trump’s Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict [also known as the “20-Point Plan”]). Actual operations may differ from depiction and sources.

Israel and Hamas have engaged in some bouts of fighting since the ceasefire. Gazans still face major challenges related to mass displacement and overcrowding, food insecurity, and scarcity of shelter and other life-sustaining or -saving supplies and services.¹⁴⁰ The de facto division of Gaza between (1) areas comprising more than half of Gaza’s territory where Israeli troops are deployed, and (2) the rest of the territory, where roughly 85% of Gaza’s population was living as of late 2025¹⁴¹ (generally subject to Hamas security control), could last indefinitely if the parties and stakeholders cannot agree on or compel solutions that apply to the entire territory (see **Figure 3** for the October 2025 ceasefire lines).¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ UN-OCHA Occupied Palestinian Territory, “Humanitarian Situation Report | 26 June 2026.”

¹⁴¹ David Ignatius, “The Middle East’s Moment of Opportunity Is Slipping Away,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 2025.

¹⁴² Emma Graham-Harrison, “US military Planning for Divided Gaza with ‘Green Zone’ Secured by International and Israeli Troops,” *Guardian* (UK), November 14, 2025; “Will the ‘Alternative Safe Communities’ Initiative Leave Gaza Divided?” Soufan Center, December 1, 2025.

Figure 3. Gaza Ceasefire Lines: October 2025

Source: *Guardian* (UK), November 2025, citing the IDF as its source.

Notes: As depicted in the map, red areas appear to be generally subject to Hamas security control; green areas appear to be generally subject to Israeli military control.

One April 2026 media report asserted that Israel has pushed forward the “yellow line” dividing these two zones in some places, increasing the amount of territory under its control.¹⁴³ Prime Minister Netanyahu appeared to confirm this in May when saying, “In Gaza now, we are no longer holding 50% [of its territory], but already 60%” (see **Figure 4** for reported June 2026 lines of control).¹⁴⁴ He later stated that this amount could increase toward 70%.¹⁴⁵ In June 2026 testimony before a House Appropriations subcommittee, Secretary of State Rubio indicated that the U.S. 20-point plan does not call for expanded Israeli territorial control, but for non-Hamas, technocratic Palestinian governance.¹⁴⁶

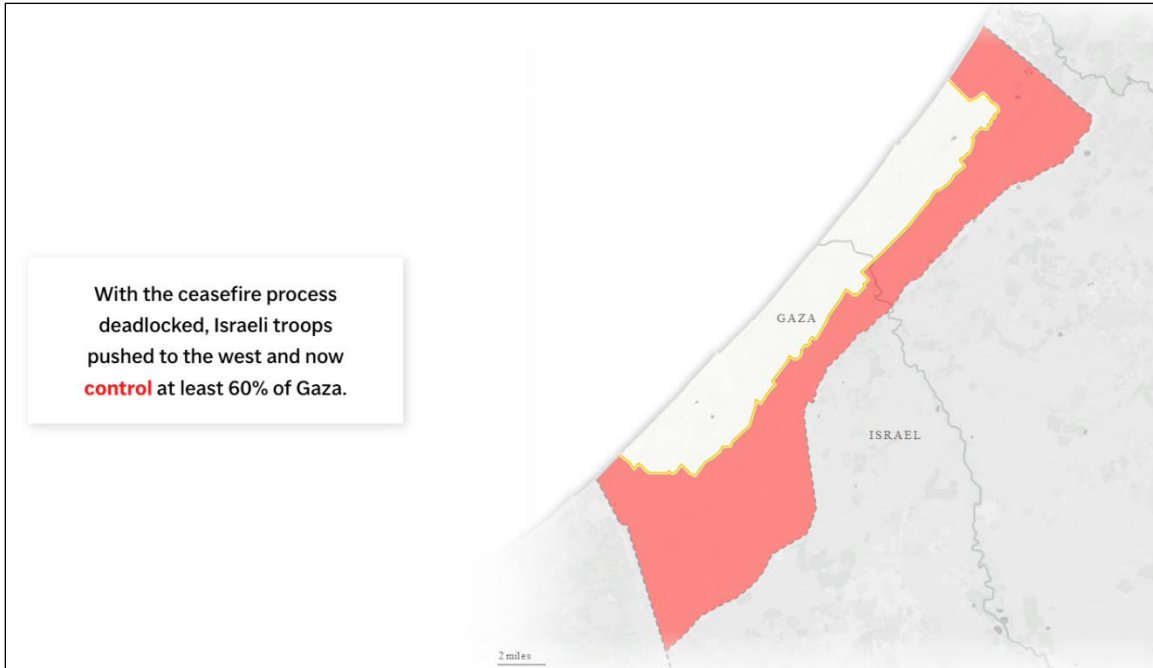
¹⁴³ Seham Tantesh and Julian Borger, “Gaza’s Yellow Line Creeps Forward As Israeli Forces Expand Zone of Control,” *Guardian* (UK), April 22, 2026.

¹⁴⁴ Israel Prime Minister’s Office, “PM Netanyahu’s Remarks at the Government Meeting,” May 17, 2026.

¹⁴⁵ David M. Halbfinger and Johnatan Reiss, “Netanyahu Says Israel Will Control 70 Percent of Gaza, Squeezing Hamas,” *New York Times*, May 28, 2026.

¹⁴⁶ Congressional Quarterly transcript of June 2, 2026, House Appropriations Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs hearing at <https://plus.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-8474779?6>.

Figure 4. Reported Gaza Lines of Control: June 2026



Sources: From a series of Associated Press maps citing the following sources: the Israeli military, Peace Now, the United Nations, the Institute for National Security Studies, Yaakov Garb, and Harvard Dataverse; and stating that basemap data is from Mapcreator.

Notes: As depicted in the map, red areas appear to be generally subject to Israeli military control; other areas of Gaza appear to be generally subject to Hamas security control.

Questions persist about how Israel’s expanded control over Gaza’s territory and Hamas’s unwillingness to date to disarm might impact the U.S. 20-point-plan and efforts to transition toward non-Hamas and non-Israel governance and security arrangements in Gaza.¹⁴⁷ It is also unclear how the early 2026 U.S./Israel-Iran conflict may impact Hamas’s ties with Iran and capacity to project force within and outside of Gaza. According to Israeli officials, Hamas in Gaza retains some arsenals of rockets, anti-tank missiles, and drones (perhaps including fiber-optic drones like those used by Hezbollah), as well as an estimated 60,000 assault rifles and 20,000 fighters.¹⁴⁸

The President Trump-chaired Board of Peace (see **Figure 2**) reportedly demanded in April that Hamas agree to demilitarize within days. Some media articles purported to describe the Board of Peace proposal as a multi-stage disarmament framework over eight months that might facilitate a security and governance transition and initial reconstruction efforts in Gaza.¹⁴⁹ Hamas leaders apparently rejected the proposal while asking for modifications, also asserting that Israel has violated the ceasefire by continuing attacks in Gaza and limiting the number of humanitarian aid

¹⁴⁷ Karen DeYoung and Gerry Shih, “Board of Peace, lacking resources, founders in Gaza,” *Washington Post*, June 2, 2026.

¹⁴⁸ Stav Levaton, “Depleted but Dangerous, Hamas Is Holding Its Fire Against Israel,” *Times of Israel*, June 11, 2026; Dov Lieber and Summer Said, “Israel and Hamas Get Ready to Go Back to War in Gaza,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 2026; Jacob Magid, “US Says Disarmament Program Will Offer Funds in Exchange for Hamas Ceding Its Guns,” *Times of Israel*, January 28, 2026.

¹⁴⁹ Itamar Eichner, “‘Voluntarily or by Force’: Hamas Boxed in on Disarmament As Gaza Plan Takes Shape,” *Ynetnews*, April 12, 2026; “Trump Board Plan Would Disarm Hamas in Stages over 8 Months, Destroy Gaza’s Tunnels,” Reuters, March 27, 2026.

trucks that access the territory.¹⁵⁰ Reportedly, Hamas insisted in May that any handover of its weapons occur as part of a framework leading to a Palestinian state.¹⁵¹ In April, the World Bank estimated Gaza’s recovery and reconstruction needs to be \$71.4 billion.¹⁵² In May, Gaza High Representative Nickolay Mladenov attempted to facilitate Hamas disarmament, Israeli withdrawal, and other Phase Two transition efforts by posting a 15-point “Roadmap to Complete the Implementation of President Trump’s Gaza Comprehensive Peace Plan.”¹⁵³

Gaza and Historical Precedent

Historical precedent in Gaza and the West Bank might provide insight into ongoing efforts to transition Gaza away from Hamas rule and implement post-conflict recovery. Since Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005, and Hamas took over the territory from PA forces led by rival faction Fatah in 2007, five major Israel-Hamas conflicts have occurred. After the first four (in 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021), Hamas retained control in Gaza and gradually rebuilt its military capabilities and expanded its tunnel network, with help from Iran and Iran’s other allies. During those timeframes, Israel and Egypt allowed some supplies to enter Gaza for humanitarian and limited commercial purposes, but generally prohibited the open import of major construction materials, citing concerns that Hamas could use them to reconstitute its capabilities more quickly.¹⁵⁴

While the scale of conflict, casualties, and damage of the 2023-2025 conflict far outpaced that of the earlier four, Hamas appears to control areas from which Israel has withdrawn. It is unclear whether various factors that distinguish this conflict from the others—including the larger scale of casualties and damage mentioned above, the apparent weakening of Iran, Israel’s seeming willingness to use its military more assertively, and the larger level of international attention—may increase the likelihood of Hamas relinquishing control of these areas.

West Bank

Israel, the PA, and security. While Israel maintains overarching military control over the West Bank and the close to 3.5 million Palestinians reportedly living there,¹⁵⁵ the PA has some authority to govern and provide security in specified Palestinian-populated areas, under Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) agreements dating back to the 1990s (see **Figure 5**).¹⁵⁶ The long-term viability of PA limited self-rule in the West Bank is unclear, in light of (1) supervening Israeli control and more than half-a-million Israeli citizens living in West Bank settlements, and (2) elements of PA rule that some analysts contend are largely undemocratic, repressive, and corrupt.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ Sam Halpern and Amichai Stein, “Hamas Refuses to Give Up Weapons, Demands Board of Peace Change Gaza Ceasefire Plan,” *Jerusalem Post*, April 15, 2026; Adam Rasgon, “Trump’s Board of Peace Gives Hamas Until Week’s End to Take Disarmament Deal,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2026.

¹⁵¹ Jacob Magid, “Board of Peace Won’t Hold Israel to Truce Terms If Hamas Doesn’t Okay Disarmament Offer,” *Times of Israel*, May 5, 2026.

¹⁵² World Bank, *Gaza Strip: Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment*, April 2026.

¹⁵³ X, Nickolay E. Mladenov (@nmladenov), May 21, 2026, 10:43 AM, <https://x.com/nmladenov/status/2057472417153401063>.

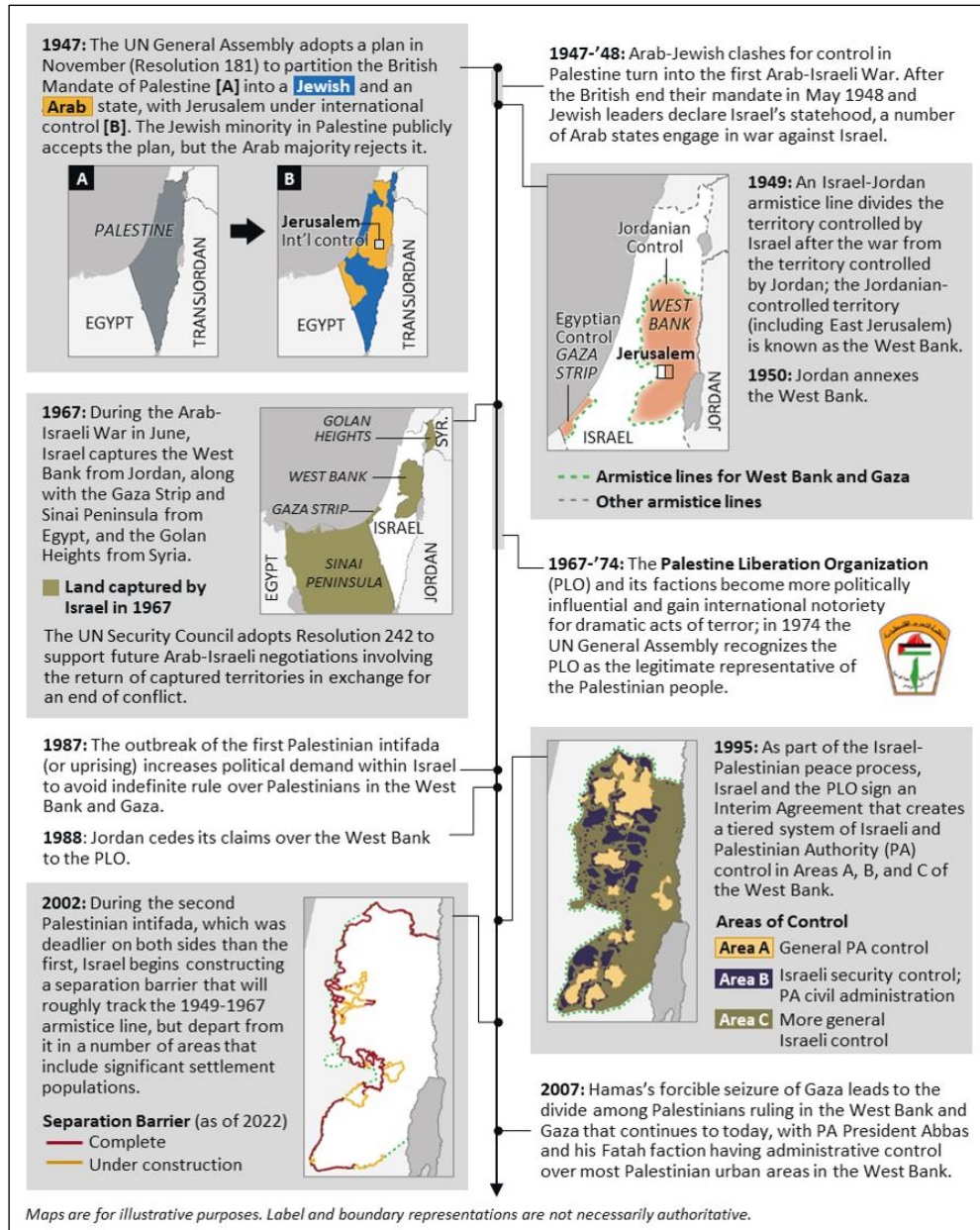
¹⁵⁴ CRS Report RL34074, *The Palestinians: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti.

¹⁵⁵ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023 states that the projection for 2026 was a “Revised [estimate] based on the final results of Population, Housing and Establishments Census, 2017.”

¹⁵⁶ The PLO is the internationally recognized representative of the Palestinian people. Various Israel-PLO agreements during the Oslo process in the 1990s created the PA as the organ of governance for limited Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Officially, the PLO represents the Palestinian national movement in international bodies, including the United Nations, often identified as “Palestine” or “State of Palestine.” For more information on the PLO and PA, see CRS Report RL34074, *The Palestinians: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti; and the European Council on Foreign Relations’ online resource Mapping Palestinian Politics at https://www.ecfr.eu/mapping_palestinian_politics/detail/institutions.

¹⁵⁷ Department of State, *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Israel, West Bank and Gaza*.

Figure 5. Selected Events Affecting West Bank Control



Sources: Graphic created by CRS using maps from various open sources, including the BBC and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Text taken from various open sources.

Notes: For additional historical detail, see CRS Report RL33476, *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti; and CRS Report RL34074, *The Palestinians: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Jim Zanotti.

Factors reportedly contributing to escalations in West Bank violence and tension over the past three years have included various Israeli actions (including settlement expansion, a rising tide of settler violence, and military operations), Palestinian militancy (reportedly fueled partly by Iranian assistance), and PA weakness.¹⁵⁸ According to the United Nations, since 2025 at least 295

¹⁵⁸ International Crisis Group, “Inside Israel’s Military Operation in a West Bank Refugee Camp,” March 4, 2025.

Palestinians and 18 Israelis have been killed in the West Bank, and more than 40,000 Palestinians have been displaced.¹⁵⁹

PA President Mahmoud Abbas heads the secular Arab nationalist faction Fatah, which has been the leading group within the PLO for decades. Abbas's age (b. 1935) has contributed to speculation about leadership succession. The United States and other Western countries have historically sought to bolster the Abbas-led PA vis-à-vis Hamas—which violently seized Gaza from Fatah-led PA forces in 2007, and also has a presence in the West Bank—and to support PA-Israel cooperation. To date during his presidency, Abbas has publicly opposed using PA security forces against Israel,¹⁶⁰ though some observers argue that the PA under Abbas has continued to incite Palestinians to violence against Israelis.¹⁶¹ Within the context of divided control since 2007—the Fatah-led PA has administered parts of the West Bank and Hamas has controlled Gaza—PA elections throughout the West Bank and Gaza have not taken place since 2005 (a presidential election that Abbas won) and 2006 (legislative elections that Hamas won). President Abbas has exercised authority by decree since 2007 in PA-administered areas of the West Bank.

Israel and the PA cooperate on some functional aspects of administration while engaging in adversarial politics on a number of issues. They reportedly coordinate on security measures to counter Hamas and other West Bank-based militants amid a dynamic in which Israeli officials sometimes state that the PA does not sufficiently curtail threats, and PA leaders express concern that Israeli actions undermine PA security forces.¹⁶² The already fragile PA West Bank economy has been further weakened after October 2023 by various Israeli measures, including the withholding or delay of certain tax transfer (aka “clearance revenue”) payments to the PA, and the suspension of access permits for around 150,000 West Bank Palestinians to work in Israel.¹⁶³ On a number of occasions, Finance Minister Smotrich has with apparent reluctance—and under reported U.S. pressure in at least some instances—assented to temporary Israeli renewals of the letter of indemnity that allows Palestinian banks to access the international financial system via Israeli banks; the current renewal is reportedly set to expire on July 12, 2026.¹⁶⁴ PA President Abbas decreed an end in 2025 to a tiered public welfare payment structure that appeared to favor Palestinians deemed terrorists by Israel (or their families).¹⁶⁵ Some reports indicate that certain tiered payments to these recipients reportedly continued at least through August 2025, and it is unclear whether subsequent measures have implemented the changes Abbas decreed.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ UN-OCHA, West Bank Monthly Snapshot—Casualties, Property Damage and Displacement | May 2026. Among the Palestinian deaths, 264 were reportedly killed by Israeli forces, 22 by Israeli settlers, and 9 by Israeli forces or settlers.

¹⁶⁰ David Makovsky, “Abbas Still Faces Unattractive Alternatives to Peacemaking,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 16, 2018.

¹⁶¹ Elliott Abrams, “The Palestinian Authority Continues to Teach Hate and to Reward Terror,” Council on Foreign Relations, March 31, 2025.

¹⁶² Tahani Mustafa, “Israel’s West Bank Incursions Highlight the Dilemmas of Palestinian Politics,” International Crisis Group, March 4, 2025; Dov Lieber and Feliz Solomon, “Inside Israel’s Military Operation in a West Bank Refugee Camp,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2025; Isabel Kershner and Fatima AbdulKarim, “Israel Embarks on an ‘Extensive’ Military Operation in the West Bank,” *New York Times*, January 21, 2025.

¹⁶³ World Bank Group, *Economic Update on the West Bank and Gaza*, May 2026.

¹⁶⁴ Melanie Robbins, “Reconstructing Gaza Starts with Giving Palestinians Financial Agency,” Atlantic Council, March 16, 2026; “Sources to ‘SadaNews’: Israel Extends Banking Relations with Palestinian Banks,” *SadaNews* (West Bank), March 26, 2026; “Israel Extends Banking Relationship with Palestinian Banks for Two Additional Weeks,” *SadaNews* (West Bank), June 29, 2026.

¹⁶⁵ “President Mahmoud Abbas Issues Decree-Law Restructuring the Social Welfare System,” Wafa News Agency, February 10, 2025.

¹⁶⁶ Israel Policy Forum, “Making the PA’s ‘Martyr’ and Prisoner Payments Reform Real,” <https://israelpolicyforum.org/making-the-pa-martyr-and-prisoner-payments-reform-real/>.

Settlements and settler violence. Some observers have characterized the means used or proposed for integrating Israeli settlements in the West Bank with Israel proper, along with restrictions on Palestinian building and land use in surrounding areas, as “creeping annexation” or “de facto annexation.”¹⁶⁷ As Israel has expanded settlements in the West Bank since 1967, it has integrated many of those settlements and their residents into the political, legal, and economic life of Israel proper. For example, while Israel deals with Palestinians in the West Bank according to military law, some norms of Israeli civilian law already apply to West Bank settlements, “either through application of personal jurisdiction over the settlers, or through military decrees that incorporated Israeli law into the law applicable to all or parts of the West Bank.”¹⁶⁸

The current government also has accelerated settlement planning and construction. In August 2025, the planning committee within Israel’s defense ministry approved settlement plans in a place known as E1, located in an area where construction potentially could impede the viability of a Palestinian state.¹⁶⁹ Some media reports in April 2026 indicated that Israel’s cabinet approved dozens of new settlements in March, many of which are reportedly outposts previously deemed illegal under Israeli law.¹⁷⁰

Settlements and International Law

Israel reportedly has 141 official settlements in the West Bank, and 360 additional settlement outposts that were created without authorization under Israeli law.¹⁷¹ A number of countries have argued that settlements are illegal under international law.¹⁷² U.S. stances on this issue since Israel’s capture of the West Bank in 1967 have varied.¹⁷³ UN Security Council Resolution 2334, adopted in December 2016 (with none voting against, and the United States as the lone abstention), stated that settlements established by Israel in “Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem,” constitute “a flagrant violation under international law” and a “major obstacle” to a two-state solution and a “just, lasting and comprehensive peace.” Israel, by contrast, asserts that the West Bank is disputed territory rather than occupied territory, and that building civilian settlements or applying Israeli law in the territory does not violate international law.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ International Crisis Group, *Sovereignty in All but Name: Israel’s Quickening Annexation of the West Bank*, October 9, 2025.

¹⁶⁸ Yuval Shany, “Israel’s New Plan to Annex the West Bank: What Happens Next?” Lawfare Blog, May 6, 2019. See also Liron A. Libman, “The Judea and Samaria Regulations Law: An Explainer,” Israel Democracy Institute, June 7, 2022.

¹⁶⁹ Jeremy Sharon, “E1 Settlement Project Widely Condemned, But Is It Fatal to Two-State Solution Idea?” *Times of Israel*, August 25, 2025.

¹⁷⁰ “Israel Approves Dozens of New Settlements in West Bank, Watchdog Says,” Reuters, April 9, 2026; “Israeli Government Secretly Approves over 30 New Settler Outposts,” CNN, April 9, 2026.

¹⁷¹ Data available at <http://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/population> (accessed May 4, 2026).

¹⁷² See, for example, German Federal Foreign Office, “Statement by the Federal Foreign Office on the Amendments to Israel’s Disengagement Law,” March 22, 2023; Permanent mission of France to the United Nations in New York, “Israel’s Settlement Policy Is Illegal Under International Law,” November 20, 2019. The most-cited international law pertaining to Israeli settlements is the Fourth Geneva Convention, Part III, Section III, Article 49 *Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*, August 12, 1949, which states in its last sentence, “The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.”

¹⁷³ For example, during the first Trump Administration, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo disagreed with a 1978 Department of State legal memorandum finding Israeli West Bank settlements to be “inconsistent with international law,” while acknowledging that other administrations had recognized “unrestrained settlement activity could be an obstacle to peace.” Department of State, “Secretary Michael R. Pompeo Remarks to the Press,” November 18, 2019. During the Biden Administration, then-Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that new settlements were “inconsistent with international law.” Department of State, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Argentine Foreign Minister Diana Mondino at a Joint Press Availability,” February 23, 2024.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, Dore Gold, “The Debate over the Future of the Territories,” *israelhayom.com*, June 17, 2020; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Israeli Settlements and International Law,” November 30, 2015; Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre, “Extending Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank,” June 2020. Israel argues that (continued...)

Amid a fall 2025 uptick in settler violence in the West Bank, 101 U.S. Representatives sent a letter to House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Brian Mast in November requesting a markup for the West Bank Violence Prevention Act (H.R. 3045).¹⁷⁵ The bill and its companion in the Senate (S. 2667) would codify the key provisions of a 2024 executive order (EO 14115) from President Joe Biden. The order directed executive branch agencies to impose sanctions against individuals and groups deemed to have responsibility for disruptive action in the West Bank; President Trump rescinded the order in January 2025.¹⁷⁶

Following instances of additional settler violence in early 2026, U.S. and IDF officials have publicly expressed concern.¹⁷⁷ In May, the IDF reportedly told Prime Minister Netanyahu that up to 80% of West Bank incidents logged by Israeli troops are Jewish attacks on Palestinians.¹⁷⁸ A May media article, citing a United Nations office, said that since the beginning of the 2026 U.S./Israel-Iran conflict, at least 13 West Bank Palestinians have been killed in settler attacks, compared with 15 in all of 2025.¹⁷⁹ A number of reports about intensified settler attacks suggest that Israeli authorities impose few constraints on the settlers and—in some cases—may seek to enable their actions.¹⁸⁰ In March 2026, the Knesset enacted a bill—which will likely face an Israeli supreme court appeal—prescribing the death penalty for West Bank Palestinians (but not for Israelis) convicted of murder in terrorist attacks.¹⁸¹ In May, the European Union simultaneously approved new sanctions against violent Israeli settlers and Hamas leaders, and later imposed specific sanctions on some Israeli individuals and organizations.¹⁸²

the previous occupying power (Jordan) did not have an internationally recognized claim to the West Bank (only a few countries recognized Jordan's 1950 annexation of the territory), and that in view of the demise of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I and the end of the British Mandate in 1948, no international actor has superior legal claim to Israel's. After Israel's 1967 capture of the West Bank, its government has accepted some responsibilities for the territory and its inhabitants in line with the Geneva Conventions. The Gush Etzion bloc of Israeli West Bank settlements is located roughly in the area where an identically-named bloc of Jewish communities existed before the founding of the state of Israel; these communities were apparently razed (with hundreds of residents killed or captured) in 1948 by Jordanian and Palestinian fighters.

¹⁷⁵ Congressman Jerry Nadler, "Upon Reaching 100 Cosponsors, Nadler, Smith, and Himes Send Letter to Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Urging a Markup of West Bank Violence Prevention Act," November 10, 2025.

¹⁷⁶ White House, "Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions," January 20, 2025 (rescinding, among other things, Executive Order [14115] on Imposing Certain Sanctions on Persons Undermining Peace, Security, and Stability in the West Bank, February 1, 2024, at <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/02/01/executive-order-on-imposing-certain-sanctions-on-persons-undermining-peace-security-and-stability-in-the-west-bank/>). See also Michael Stratford, "Treasury Terminates Sanctions on Israeli Settlers in West Bank," *Politico*, January 24, 2025.

¹⁷⁷ Department of State, "Secretary of State Marco Rubio Remarks to Press," March 27, 2026; Amos Harel and Yaniv Kubovich, "The Military Arm of the Campaign to Judaize the West Bank Has Been Given a Free Hand," *Ha'aretz*, March 27, 2026.

¹⁷⁸ Lazar Berman and Emanuel Fabian, "IDF Officers Said to Tell PM Jewish Terror Accounts for Up to 80% of West Bank Incidents," *Times of Israel*, May 14, 2026.

¹⁷⁹ Natan Odenheimer et al., "With World Distracted by War, Extremist Settlers Intensify Attacks in West Bank," *New York Times*, May 4, 2026.

¹⁸⁰ Odenheimer et al., "With World Distracted by War, Extremist Settlers Intensify Attacks in West Bank"; Jeremy Diamond et al., "Israeli Soldiers Echo Settler Ideology, Talk of Revenge After Targeting Palestinians and Detaining CNN Crew in the West Bank," CNN, March 28, 2026; Jacob Magid and Charlie Summers, "Rubio Says 'There's Some Concern' West Bank Violence Could Undermine Gaza Ceasefire," *Times of Israel*, November 13, 2025.

¹⁸¹ "Knesset Passes Death Penalty Law for Palestinians Convicted of Deadly Acts of Terror," Reuters/*Times of Israel*, March 31, 2026.

¹⁸² "EU Foreign Ministers Approve Sanctions on Violent Israeli Settlers, Hamas Leaders," Reuters/*Times of Israel*, May 11, 2026; Council of the European Union, "Extremist Israeli settlers: EU Lists Four Entities and Three Individuals," May 28, 2026. In June, the UK, Canada, France, Norway, Australia, and New Zealand imposed sanctions on some "individuals and entities involved in financing and enabling settler violence in the occupied West Bank." UK Government, "UK and Allies Sanction Networks Enabling Settler Violence in the West Bank," June 9, 2026.

In June 2026 testimony before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, Secretary of State Rubio said, “We have advocated repeatedly and made very clear that we want the status quo, meaning that there not be additional actions taken in the West Bank that can destabilize the broader situation.” He also stated that Israel has “stood up special units of some of their forces” to take on settlers or gangs that “carry out some of these acts of violence.”¹⁸³

Potential annexation and Trump Administration. After obtaining support from key Muslim-majority countries for the 20-point plan for Gaza in September 2025, President Trump declared that he would not allow Israel to unilaterally annex the West Bank, later threatening to withhold U.S. support if it were to do so.¹⁸⁴ The Israeli Knesset had voted 71-13 earlier in 2025 to approve a non-binding resolution for annexing areas of Jewish settlement within the West Bank,¹⁸⁵ and the Israeli government had reportedly been debating whether to move forward with annexation.¹⁸⁶

**First Trump Administration (2017-2021):
Selected Actions Impacting Israeli-Palestinian Issues**

December 2017	President Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, prompting the PLO and PA to cut off high-level diplomatic relations with the United States.
May 2018	The U.S. embassy to Israel opened in Jerusalem, while retaining existing offices in Tel Aviv.
September 2018	The Administration announced the closure of the PLO office in Washington, DC.
March 2019	The U.S. consulate general in Jerusalem—previously an independent diplomatic mission to the Palestinians—was subsumed under the authority of the U.S. embassy to Israel. President Trump recognized Israeli sovereignty claims in the Golan Heights.
November 2019	Then-Secretary of State Michael Pompeo said that the Administration disagreed with a 1978 State Department legal opinion stating that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are inconsistent with international law. (Biden Administration Secretary of State Antony Blinken may have reversed Pompeo’s action in February 2024. ¹⁸⁷)
January 2020	President Trump released a U.S. peace proposal for Israel and the Palestinians that largely favored Israeli positions and contemplated possible U.S. recognition of Israeli annexation of some West Bank areas.
August 2020	Israel and the UAE announced the first case in which the Trump Administration facilitated some normalization of Israel’s relations with Arab states (known as the Abraham Accords). Israel reportedly suspended consideration of West Bank annexation for four years in connection with the UAE deal. Steps followed toward normalization with Bahrain, Morocco, and (until the outbreak of its civil war) Sudan.

¹⁸³ Congressional Quarterly transcript of June 3, 2026 Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs hearing at <https://plus.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-8475228?0>.

¹⁸⁴ “President Trump Signs Executive Orders,” CQ Newsmaker Transcripts, September 25, 2025; “Read the Full Transcript of Donald Trump’s Interview on the Gaza Ceasefire with TIME,” *Time*, October 23, 2025. In September 2025, 178 Members of Congress sent a letter urging Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israel’s defense and foreign ministers “to refrain from steps toward unilateral annexation and to recommit to a negotiated outcome consistent with U.S. policy and the regional vision embodied in the Abraham Accords.” Reported text of letter at <https://image.jewishinsider.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/24235022/Quill-Letter-L29386-Schneider-Raskin-Letter-on-West-Bank-Annexation-Version-3-09-24-2025-%40-11-27-PM-With-Watermark.pdf>.

¹⁸⁵ “Knesset Votes 71-13 for Non-Binding Motion Calling to Annex West Bank,” *Times of Israel*, July 23, 2025.

¹⁸⁶ “Exclusive: UAE Could Downgrade Diplomatic Ties If Israel Annexes West Bank, Sources Say,” Reuters, September 18, 2025.

¹⁸⁷ Department of State, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Argentine Foreign Minister Diana Mondino at a Joint Press Availability,” February 23, 2024.

October 2020	The United States and Israel signed agreements removing restrictions on three binational foundations from funding projects in areas seized by Israel's military in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The foundations are the Binational Industrial Research and Development Foundation (BIRD), the Binational Science Foundation (BSF), and the Binational Agricultural Research and Development Foundation (BARD).
November 2020	Secretary Pompeo announced a change in U.S. product labeling regulations, requiring products from Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be identified as coming from Israel.

Syria

Since the fall of Asad in 2024, Israel (alongside Turkey, with which Israel appears to be developing some form of regional rivalry, as discussed above) has emerged as one of the most impactful outside actors in Syria. Israel has undertaken hundreds of airstrikes to degrade Syrian military positions and stockpiles and insisted that areas in Syria south of Damascus remain permanently demilitarized. Syria's interim leaders reject Israel's demilitarization demands and have called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the positions they occupied before their troop movements in December 2024 following Asad's ouster.¹⁸⁸

Israel also has targeted Syrian government forces, state facilities, and non-state actors while stating that it seeks to protect Syrian minorities. For example, Israel has acted militarily on behalf of Druze communities in southern Syria, though some Syrian Druze have rejected any association with Israel.¹⁸⁹ The Druze are a religious minority group with members concentrated in southern Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. One December 2025 media article suggested that Israel has airdropped equipment, provided funding, and facilitated training for Druze fighters in Syria—with airdrops since August focused on nonlethal equipment like body armor and medical supplies.¹⁹⁰

U.S. and Israeli priorities in Syria may differ to some extent. U.S. officials have cultivated ties with Syria's interim leaders and have suggested they be given opportunities to deliver on their stated objectives of re forging national unity and coexisting peacefully with regional countries, including Israel. In the wake of the October 7, 2023 attacks and subsequent conflicts involving Gaza and Lebanon, Israeli leaders appear skeptical of territorial withdrawals or compromises that could increase Israel's vulnerability, particularly given Syrian interim President Ahmed al Sharaa's previous association with Al Qaeda, and Turkey's presence and influence in Syria.¹⁹¹ The Trump Administration has eliminated or waived most sanctions on Syria, despite reportedly receiving earlier entreaties from Prime Minister Netanyahu to keep sanctions in place.¹⁹²

U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Syria and Iraq Tom Barrack (who also serves as U.S. Ambassador to Turkey) has mediated Israel-Syria talks aimed at stabilizing security arrangements between the two countries. A deal could include elements of demilitarization in southern Syria and Syrian government agreements to prevent attacks against Israel or Syrian Druze

¹⁸⁸ Susannah George and Tobi Raji, "Syrian President Details Plans to Work with Americans He Once Fought," *Washington Post*, November 11, 2025. For a reported depiction and description of Israeli military positions in Syria, see Daniel Hilton et al., "Ceasefires and Construction: Satellite Images Reveal How Israel Is Cementing Its Presence in Lebanon and Syria," *Middle East Eye*, June 11, 2026.

¹⁸⁹ "Israeli Military Strikes Near Syria's Presidential Palace After Warning over Sectarian Attacks," Associated Press, May 2, 2025; "Syrians in Predominantly Druze City Reject Israeli Statements, Affirm National Unity," *Arab News*, February 25, 2025.

¹⁹⁰ Gerry Shih et al., "How Israeli Covert Activities in Syria Seek to Thwart Its New Government," *Washington Post*, December 23, 2025.

¹⁹¹ "Israel Refuses to Withdraw from Syria," *Economist*, December 11, 2025.

¹⁹² "Trump Says He Did Not Consult Israel Before Restoring Ties with Syria's Sharaa," *Times of Israel*, May 16, 2025.

communities, in exchange for Israeli withdrawals from areas its military has controlled since December 2024.¹⁹³ U.S. officials have also reportedly proposed a demilitarized economic zone on both sides of the border.¹⁹⁴ In January 2026, Israel and Syria agreed to establish “a joint fusion mechanism—a dedicated communication cell—to facilitate immediate and ongoing coordination on their intelligence sharing, military de-escalation, diplomatic engagement, and commercial opportunities under the supervision of the United States.”¹⁹⁵

Yemen

The Iran-backed Houthi movement in Yemen (also known as Ansar Allah, another FTO) regularly refers to Israel as the core security threat to the region. Following the October 2023 Hamas-led attacks on Israel, the Houthis launched numerous long-range missile and drone strikes against targets in Israel, while also conducting attacks on international shipping in and around the Red Sea. From March to May 2025, U.S. forces expanded strikes against the Houthis, seeking to compel a lasting end to Houthi maritime attacks. The U.S. campaign ended under an agreement brokered by neighboring Oman in which the Houthis reportedly agreed to cease targeting U.S. vessels and the United States reportedly agreed to halt strikes on the Houthis.

The Houthis resumed attacks on some non-U.S. ships in summer 2025 and continued to launch hundreds of long-range strikes against targets in Israel.¹⁹⁶ Israel in turn expanded its own strikes against Houthi targets, destroying port, airport, military, and electricity infrastructure, and killing the prime minister and several civilian and military officials of the Houthi government.¹⁹⁷ The Houthis suspended their attacks after Israel and Hamas reached their ceasefire in October 2025, reportedly telling Hamas that if Israel “resumes its aggression against Gaza, we will return to our military operations” and “reinstate the ban on Israeli navigation in the Red and Arabian Seas.”¹⁹⁸ The Houthis fired a number of projectiles at Israel during the 2026 U.S./Israel-Iran conflict (reportedly in March, April, and June).

Issues for Congress

Recent U.S. Aid and Arms Sales to Israel

Expedited and ongoing U.S. arms exports to Israel since October 2023 have received increased congressional scrutiny.¹⁹⁹ In 2025, the Trump Administration formally notified Congress of

¹⁹³ Barak Ravid, “Scoop: Israel-Syria Talks Planned in Paris with U.S. Mediating,” *Axios*, January 4, 2026; Rina Bassist, “Under US Pressure, Israel Softens Syria Tone But Is Wary of Sharaa,” *Al-Monitor*, December 8, 2025.

¹⁹⁴ Barak Ravid, “U.S. Proposed Demilitarized Economic Zone on Israel-Syria Border,” *Axios*, January 6, 2026.

¹⁹⁵ Department of State, “Joint Statement on the Trilateral Meeting Between the Governments of the United States of America, the State of Israel, and the Syrian Arab Republic,” January 6, 2026.

¹⁹⁶ UN Document S/2025/650, Yemen Panel of Experts Final Report, October 17, 2025.

¹⁹⁷ Samy Magdy, “Israeli Airstrike Kills Houthi Rebel Prime Minister in Yemen’s Capital,” *Associated Press*, August 30, 2025.

¹⁹⁸ Jon Gambrell, “Yemen’s Houthi Rebels Signal That They’ve Stopped Attacks on Israel and Red Sea Shipping,” *Associated Press*, November 11, 2025.

¹⁹⁹ See CRS Report RL33222, *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel: Overview and Developments since October 7, 2023*, by Jeremy M. Sharp. Within this context, see White House (Biden Administration), “National Security Memorandum on Safeguards and Accountability with Respect to Transferred Defense Articles and Defense Services,” February 8, 2024. The Trump Administration reportedly revoked this memorandum (known as NSM-20) in February 2025. “Trump Rescinds Order on Rights Abuses with US-Supplied Weapons, Sources Say,” *Reuters*, February 24, 2025.

possible arms sales for Israel worth more than \$12 billion,²⁰⁰ and Senator Bernie Sanders introduced joint resolutions of disapproval against multiple sales (S.J.Res. 22-23, 26-27, 32-35, and 40-42), none of which have succeeded to date.²⁰¹ The Administration reportedly formally notified the 119th Congress of some \$8 billion worth of these potential sales in February 2025 without first receiving pre-approval from both the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC), which the executive branch customarily has sought in other cases.²⁰² Later in February 2025, the Administration invoked emergency authorities under Section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) to preempt the regular AECA-mandated congressional review period for sales to Israel of nearly \$4 billion in arms and equipment (including guided and unguided munitions and bulldozers).²⁰³

As of July 2026, the Administration has reportedly formally notified Congress of possible additional sales of more than \$7 billion. January 2026 notifications, totaling more than \$6.5 billion, included attack helicopters and infantry assault vehicles,²⁰⁴ with HFAC Ranking Member Gregory Meeks asserting that the Administration had again proceeded without receiving his customary pre-approval.²⁰⁵ In the first week of the conflict with Iran in March 2026, the Administration reportedly invoked emergency authorities to notify Congress of munitions sales to Israel of an estimated \$650 million.²⁰⁶ (Also during March, the Administration notified Congress of similar emergency sales to multiple Arab states.) Senator Sanders introduced three additional joint resolutions of disapproval (S.J. Res. 136-138) in response to the emergency sales to Israel, none of which have succeeded to date.²⁰⁷

U.S. and Israeli officials have reportedly begun discussions regarding an MOU on security-related funding to cover the 10 years after the current MOU expires in FY2028.²⁰⁸ Prime Minister Netanyahu and other Israeli officials, with the support of some Members of Congress, have proposed phasing out direct U.S. Foreign Military Financing to Israel (currently \$3.3 billion annually) and shifting the bilateral cooperation focus to joint programs, research and development, and co-production.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁰ See CRS Report RL31675, *Arms Sales: Congressional Review Process*, by Paul K. Kerr.

²⁰¹ On April 3, 2025, motions to discharge two of these resolutions from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) failed: S.J.Res. 26 by a 15-83 Yea-Nay vote, and S.J.Res. 33 by a 15-82 Yea-Nay vote. On July 30, motions to discharge two others failed while attracting more support: S.J.Res. 34 by a 24-73 Yea-Nay vote, and S.J.Res. 41 by a 27-70 Yea-Nay vote.

²⁰² Edward Wong and Robert Jimison, “Trump Administration Moves to Send \$8 Billion in Arms to Israel, Bypassing Some Lawmakers,” *New York Times*, February 8, 2025. The executive branch’s customary practice of seeking pre-approval also extends to the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

²⁰³ Department of State, “Military Assistance to Israel,” March 1, 2025.

²⁰⁴ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Transmittal Nos. 26-08, 25-86, 25-94, and 25-87, January 30, 2026.

²⁰⁵ Representative Gregory Meeks, “House Foreign Affairs Ranking Member Meeks: Administration Again Sidesteps Congress to Rush \$6 Billion in Arms Sales,” January 30, 2026.

²⁰⁶ Department of State, “Israel—Munitions and Munitions Support,” March 6, 2026; “US Bypasses Congressional Review to Approve Munitions Sale to Israel,” *Reuters/Times of Israel*, March 8, 2026.

²⁰⁷ On April 16, 2026, two motions failed while attracting more support than similar votes in April 2025: a motion to discharge S.J.Res. 138 from the SFRC by a 36-63 Yea-Nay vote; and a motion to discharge S.J.Res. 32 (one of the resolutions introduced by Senator Sanders in March 2025) by a 40-59 Yea-Nay vote.

²⁰⁸ CRS Insight IN12695, *Possible Changes in U.S. Military Aid to Israel: Considerations for Congress*, by Jeremy M. Sharp.

²⁰⁹ “CNBC Exclusive: Transcript: Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu Speaks with CNBC’s Sara Eisen on ‘Squawk on the Street’ Today,” June 3, 2026; Marc Rod, “Stutzman Introduces Resolution Backing Netanyahu’s Call to Wind Down U.S. Aid,” *Jewish Insider*, June 3, 2026.

Proposed FY2027 Defense and Intelligence Cooperation Provisions

The version of the FY2027 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) reported to the House in June 2026 (H.R. 8800) includes a U.S.-Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative (Section 224) that would require the Secretary of Defense to designate an executive agent “responsible for synchronizing cooperative efforts between the United States and Israel, to expand and accelerate bilateral defense technology research, development, testing, evaluation, integration, and industrial cooperation.”²¹⁰ The version of the FY2027 NDAA reported to the Senate in June (S. 4784) contains a similar provision (Section 1217) that would require the Secretary of Defense to establish a cooperative initiative in consultation with Israel’s defense minister “to expand and accelerate bilateral defense technology research, development, testing, evaluation, coordination, and industrial cooperation.” Under both versions, the initiative could provide for closer U.S.-Israel collaboration across government, academic, and private sectors and establish “frameworks for joint ventures, licensing agreements, and United States-based co-production or manufacturing partnerships with Israeli industry” across an array of critical and emerging defense domains. S. 4784 also includes a provision (Section 845) that would require a report to Congress from the Secretary of Defense by March 2027 on “the feasibility and advisability of establishing a strategic partnership on defense industrial priorities between the United States and Israel.”

The version of the FY2027 Intelligence Authorization Act reported to the Senate in May 2026 by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (S. 4615) includes a provision (Section 622) that would amend Title XI of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3231 et seq.) to “expand and enhance intelligence sharing with Israel,” and require that “The President shall document any determination to suspend, reduce, or otherwise materially limit intelligence sharing or related security information exchanges with the Government of Israel, including a description of the national security rationale supporting the change.” The provision would also “expand and enhance intelligence sharing and analytic cooperation with countries that have normalized relations with Israel pursuant to the Abraham Accords,” subject to certain safeguards and a provision requiring the Director of National Intelligence to restrict the access to U.S. intelligence sharing and analytic cooperation of any recipient that “has any intelligence, defense, or technological information sharing relationship with an adversarial nation.”

For more on U.S. aid and arms sales to Israel and the role of Congress, see CRS Report RL33222, *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel: Overview and Developments since October 7, 2023*, by Jeremy M. Sharp; and CRS Insight IN12695, *Possible Changes in U.S. Military Aid to Israel: Considerations for Congress*, by Jeremy M. Sharp.

Role of Congress and Key Questions

Congress may assess U.S. national security priorities and deploy various legislative and oversight tools to support, reject, or seek to modify the Administration’s approach to Israel and the larger Middle East region. Examples of proposed legislation on Israel beyond aid, arms sales, and bilateral defense and intelligence cooperation include some efforts to strengthen Israel’s partnerships with surrounding countries (Optimizing Acquisition Strategies for Integrated Security (OASIS) in the Middle East Act, S. 4681; Eastern Mediterranean Gateway Act, S. 4443 and H.R. 3307), and some efforts to discourage activities that could contribute to instability (such as the West Bank Violence Protection Act discussed above, S. 2667 and H.R. 3045).

Questions that could affect congressional deliberations on U.S.-Israel security cooperation and other legislation regarding bilateral relations may include:

- **Israel’s impact on U.S. interests.** How do Israeli actions, including those to prevent, deter, or respond to perceived threats in the Middle East, advance or hinder U.S. national interests, regional and global economic stability, and U.S. military readiness in the region and other areas important to U.S. and international security? What contributions does Israel make to U.S. interests with regard to technology cooperation, defense production, and intelligence sharing?

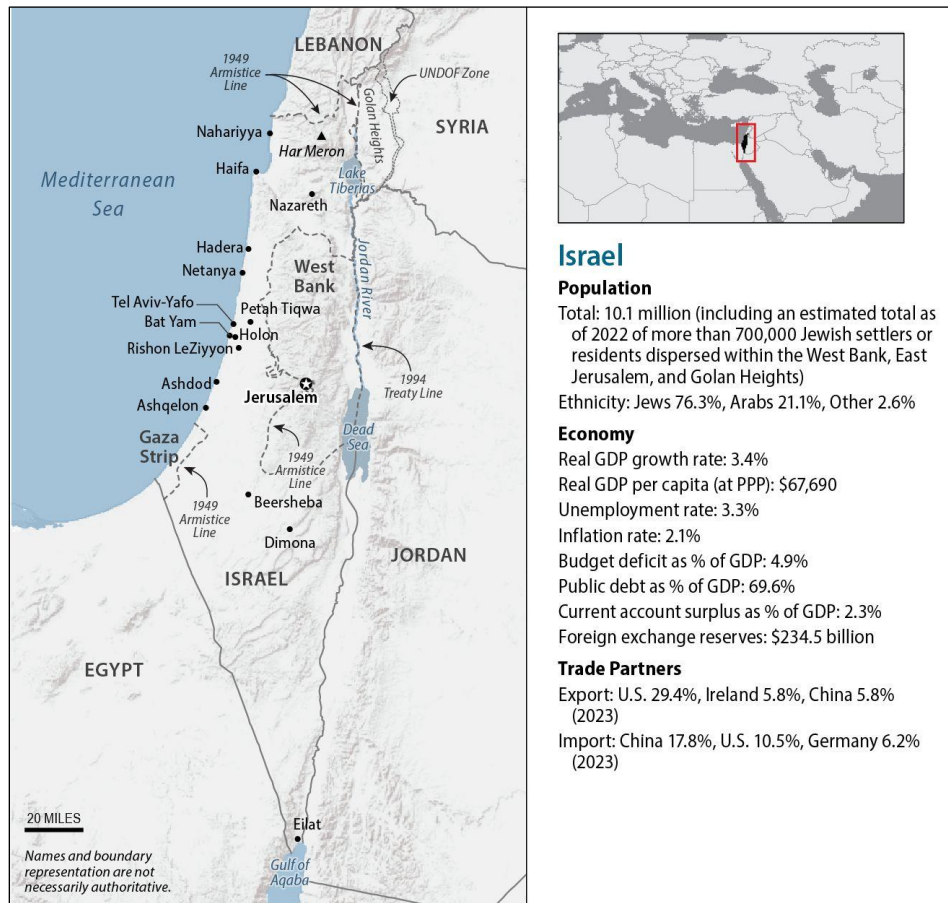
²¹⁰ See also Marc Rod, “House Committee Blocks Effort to Strip U.S.-Israel Cooperation Provision from Annual Defense Bill,” *Jewish Insider*, June 4, 2026; “Top Armed Services Democrat Flips on U.S.-Israel Cooperation Provision in Defense Bill,” June 28, 2026.

Since October 2023, what effects have surges of U.S. military assets to the region to assist Israel's defense had on fueling, mitigating, or preventing conflict? How should these effects impact future U.S. deployments and cooperation with Israel?

- **Action on U.S. aid/arms sales and U.S.-Israel joint programs.** What action (if any) should be taken to increase, reduce, continue, or condition the scope and level of U.S. aid and arms sales to Israel? Should Israeli behavior related to regional security, trade and investment, humanitarian concerns, and other factors influence U.S. decisions on these points? U.S. and Israeli officials have referred to possibly phasing out direct U.S. military aid to Israel and focusing more on joint programs. What are the national security, economic, and other implications of proposed legislative provisions for FY2027 that could affect the level and scope of U.S.-Israel defense industrial integration and intelligence sharing? How might any such provisions affect future congressional oversight of U.S.-Israel security cooperation? If U.S. and Israeli officials negotiate another bilateral MOU to cover U.S. military assistance for Israel after FY2028, what key terms or principles should it include?
- **Possible effect of Israel-related military operations on U.S. defense articles and stockpiles.** What effect might intensified and/or prolonged U.S. military operations and deployments in the region in coordination with Israel have on the availability to the United States and its partners of important defense articles—including air defense interceptors and radars, fighter and tanker aircraft, and technologically advanced munitions? What is the status of U.S.-Israel joint programs to implement more cost-effective air, naval, and ground-based defense solutions?
- **Sustainability of Israeli buffer zones and their regional impact.** What resources, domestic political consensus, and foreign support would Israel need to maintain an indefinite Israeli military presence in large buffer zones in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria? What effects might such operations have on Israel's military capacity, economy, and political life, and on efforts to forge greater and more durable political and economic stability in those places and other regional hotspots like Yemen and Iraq? What effects might such operations have on U.S. interests?
- **Israel's effect on other regional U.S. partners.** How are Israeli military actions and deployments in Iran, Lebanon, Gaza, and Syria affecting the security, political, and economic decisions and calculations of other key U.S. partners in the region, including Arab Gulf states, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan? How are Israeli policies and operations affecting the willingness of these partners to work with the United States and Israel—via the Abraham Accords or other initiatives—on establishing durable networks for air and naval defense, corridors for trade and investment, and other critical functions with implications for global strategic competition?
- **Relationship between Israeli policies and political and humanitarian outcomes.** How are developments in Israeli domestic and foreign policy affecting the possibilities of security for Israel, humanitarian welfare and economic opportunity for Gazans and Lebanese, and some form of national self-determination for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza? What is the likelihood that Jewish Israeli ultra-nationalist figures such as Bezael Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir will remain in government after the 2026 elections in Israel? What are

prospects for the U.S. 20-point-plan in Gaza, deepening Israeli control or annexation in the West Bank, and ongoing disputes over holy sites in Jerusalem?

Appendix A. Israel: Map and Basic Facts



Sources: Graphic created by CRS. Map boundaries and information generated using Department of State Boundaries (2017); Esri (2013); the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency GeoNames Database (2015); DeLorme (2014). Fact information from Economist Intelligence Unit, World Bank, Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, Bank of Israel, and Peace Now. All numbers are estimates or projections for 2026 unless otherwise specified.

Notes: Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative. The United States recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017 without taking a position on the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty. The United States recognized the Golan Heights as part of Israel in 2019; however, UN Security Council Resolution 497, adopted on December 17, 1981, held that the area of the Golan Heights controlled by Israel's military is occupied territory belonging to Syria.

Appendix B. Main Israeli Parties and Their Leaders

RIGHT



Likud (Consolidation) – Coalition

Israel's historical repository of right-of-center nationalist ideology; skeptical of territorial compromise; has also championed free-market policies. Four of its Knesset seats are held by people who were elected as members of the New Hope party, which initially was in the opposition, but later merged with Likud.

Leader: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Born in 1949, Netanyahu returned as Israel's prime minister in December 2022. Previously, he served as prime minister from 2009 to 2021, and also from 1996 to 1999. Netanyahu served in an elite special forces unit (Sayeret Matkal), and received his higher education at MIT. Throughout a career in politics and diplomacy, he has been renowned both for his skepticism regarding the exchange of land for peace with the Palestinians—which has solidified during the 2020s into outright opposition to Palestinian statehood—and his desire to counter Iran's nuclear program and regional influence. He is generally regarded as both a political dealmaker and a security-minded nationalist. In 2019, he was indicted for various corruption-related offenses; his trial is ongoing.



Beit Achdut (Together)

New consensus party formed to contest 2026 elections against Prime Minister Netanyahu. A component party, the centrist Yesh Atid (There Is a Future, led by Yair Lapid), leads the current Knesset opposition.

Leader: Naftali Bennett

Born in 1972, Bennett served as Israel's prime minister from June 2021 to June 2022 in a power-sharing arrangement with Yair Lapid. Bennett served in various cabinet positions in previous governments. After serving in Israeli special forces units, Bennett was a successful software entrepreneur and lived for a time in the United States. He served as Netanyahu's chief of staff from 2006 to 2008 while Netanyahu was opposition leader. Bennett led the Yesha Council (the umbrella organization for Israeli West Bank settlers) from 2010 to 2012, and then joined Israeli electoral politics in 2013.



HaTzionut HaDatit (Religious Zionism) – Coalition

Ultra-nationalist party with focus on expanding settlements, supporting annexation of West Bank areas, and aligning Israeli societal practices with traditional Jewish religious law. Elected on a common slate with Jewish Power and Noam.

Leader: Bezalel Smotrich

Born in 1980, Smotrich is Israel's finance minister, as well as a minister within the defense ministry with some responsibilities over West Bank administration. He has headed the underlying party that leads Religious Zionism since 2019. A trained lawyer, he has engaged in regular activism to promote Jewish nationalist and religiously conservative causes.



Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) – Coalition

Ultra-nationalist party with similar positions to Religious Zionism. Elected on a common slate with Religious Zionism and Noam.

Leader: Itamar Ben Gvir

Born in 1976, Ben Gvir is Israel's national security minister. He once belonged to Kach, a movement based on the racist ideology of former Knesset member Meir Kahane (1932-1990) that was banned from elections in the 1990s. Ben Gvir was convicted in 2007 for incitement to racism and supporting terrorism but says that he has moderated his positions and does not generalize about Arabs. He is a lawyer and has represented Jewish nationalist activists. Ben Gvir has been a regular fixture at contentious gatherings of Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem.



Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) – Opposition

Pro-secular, right-of-center nationalist party with base of support among Russian speakers from the former Soviet Union.

Leader: Avigdor Lieberman

Born in 1958, Lieberman has previously served as Israel’s defense minister, foreign minister, and finance minister. He is generally viewed as an ardent nationalist and canny political actor with prime ministerial aspirations. Lieberman was born in the Soviet Union (in what is now Moldova) and immigrated to Israel in 1978. He worked under Netanyahu from 1988 to 1997. Disillusioned by Netanyahu’s willingness to consider concessions to the Palestinians, Lieberman founded Yisrael Beiteinu as a platform for former Soviet immigrants. He was acquitted of corruption allegations in a 2013 case.

LEFT



Labor (Avoda) – Opposition

Israel’s historical repository of social democratic, left-of-center, pro-secular Zionist ideology; associated with efforts to end Israel’s responsibility for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Leader: Yair Golan

Born in 1962, Golan became Labor’s leader in 2024. After a military career in which he served as IDF deputy chief of staff from 2014 to 2017, Golan served in the Knesset in 2019-2020 as part of the Democratic Union alliance and 2020-2022 representing the Meretz party. In June 2024, Golan announced a merger between Labor and Meretz into a party calling itself “The Democrats.”

CENTER



Yashar (Upright)

New party formed to contest 2026 elections against Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Leader: Gadi Eisenkot

Born in 1960, Eisenkot served as IDF chief of general staff from 2015 to 2019. He then became a Knesset member for the National Unity party in 2022. After the October 7, 2023 attacks, Eisenkot joined the government and became an observer in Israel’s war cabinet as a minister without portfolio until leaving the government in June 2024. He resigned from the Knesset and left the National Unity party in July 2025.



Blue and White (Kahol Lavan) – Opposition

Seeks to draw contrasts with Netanyahu-led Likud by claiming support for long-standing Israeli institutions such as the judiciary and for an inclusive vision of Israeli nationalism for Jewish and non-Jewish citizens. Varying views on Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Known as the National Unity party from 2022 to 2025.

Leader: Benny Gantz

Born in 1959, Gantz served as IDF chief of general staff from 2011 to 2015. He then served as defense minister from 2020 to 2022. After the October 7, 2023 attacks, Gantz joined the government and Israel’s war cabinet as a minister without portfolio until leaving the government in June 2024.



Reservists (HaMiluimnikim)

New party formed to contest 2026 elections, prioritizing full conscription into military or national service for all Israeli citizens.

Leader: Yoaz Hendel

Born in 1975, Hendel commanded a naval special forces unit and became a history professor and writer. He served briefly as director of communications for Prime Minister Netanyahu and resigned over some differences. He entered the Knesset in 2019 with the Blue and White party, and switched to the New Hope party in 2020, serving twice as minister of communications before switching to the (now defunct) Yamina party.

ULTRA-ORTHODOX



Shas (Sephardic Torah Guardians) – Coalition Mizrahi Haredi (“ultra-Orthodox”) party; favors welfare and education funds in support of Haredi lifestyle; opposes compromise with Palestinians on control over Jerusalem. The party left the government in 2025 over the Haredi conscription issue, but stayed in the Knesset coalition.

Leader: Aryeh Deri

Born in 1959, Deri led Shas from 1983 to 1999 before being convicted for bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in 1999 for actions taken while serving as interior minister. He returned as the party’s leader in 2013. As part of a plea deal for tax fraud in January 2022, Deri agreed to resign from the Knesset, but returned in the November 2022 election. In January 2023, Israel’s High Court of Justice ruled that he could not serve as interior and health minister in the current government because he had indicated in the 2022 plea deal that he would permanently leave politics.



United Torah Judaism – Generally supports coalition Ashkenazi Haredi coalition (Agudat Yisrael and Degel HaTorah); favors welfare and education funds in support of Haredi lifestyle; opposes territorial compromise with Palestinians and conscription of Haredim; generally seeks greater application of its interpretation of traditional Jewish law. The party left the government in 2025 over the Haredi conscription issue while continuing to generally support the coalition in Knesset voting.

Leader: Yitzhak Goldknopf

Born in 1951, Goldknopf served as Israel’s construction and housing minister prior to the party leaving the current government in 2025. He has been prominent in the ultra-Orthodox community as an operator of kindergartens and day care centers, and as an advocate for legal measures to enforce Sabbath observance.

ARAB



Hadash-Ta’al – Opposition Electoral slate in the current Knesset featuring two Arab parties that combine socialist and Arab nationalist political strains: Hadash (Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) and Ta’al (Arab Movement for Renewal). For the scheduled 2026 elections, Hadash announced in June that it and Ta’al would run on a joint list with the secular, Arab nationalist Balad party.

Leader: Yousef Jabarin

Born in 1972, Jabarin is the leader of Hadash, an Arab Israeli socialist party, along with the overall Hadash-Ta’al slate. Jabarin is a legal scholar and served in the Knesset from 2015 to 2021, and was chosen as Hadash’s leader in 2026 after his predecessor Ayman Odeh stepped down.



United Arab List (UAL or Ra’am) – Opposition Islamist Arab party that embodies conservative social values while seeking state support to improve Arabs’ socioeconomic position within Israel.

Leader: Mansour Abbas

Born in 1974, Abbas has led the UAL since 2007 and is a dentist by profession. He led the UAL into the previous 2021-2022 coalition after receiving promises that the government would focus more resources and attention on socioeconomic help for Arab Israelis.

Sources: Various open sources.

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