

Who will pay to rebuild Gaza?

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It seems to me that the time has arrived to ask the question that I am not seeing asked almost anywhere, which is, who will pay to rebuild Gaza, and under what terms will that money be spent?

Gaza is in ruins. Entire neighbourhoods have been levelled. It is reported that 92% of houses are damaged or destroyed. Hospitals and schools are shattered, and water and power infrastructure have been deliberately targeted. According [to a joint assessment](#) by the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank, reconstruction over the next decade will require about \$53 billion. That report concludes that more than \$50 billion is needed just to restore basic infrastructure and services.

Such a sum is beyond the capacity of the Palestinians themselves. But the quantum of the sum involved is not the heart of the issue in this case. The real question is who will supply and control those funds, who will write the rules, and who will benefit? Answering these questions is essential if we are to know who is going to control the real fate of the people of Gaza, and maybe the West Bank.

The proposals currently on the table

A survey of the known plans for rebuilding is deeply discouraging.

One plan is the so-called GREAT Trust, or the 'Gaza Reconstitution, Economic Acceleration and Transformation' scheme, which is what Trump has been discussing with the likes of Tony Blair, as [explained here](#). **That plan envisions a ten-year trusteeship over Gaza, external oversight on project execution, and the use of international intermediaries and private investment. The Arab Centre in Washington, D.C., has described this plan as a 'blueprint for dispossession'. It proposes 'voluntary' relocation of Palestinians during reconstruction, limits their role in decision-making, and centres external actors in governing and designing Gaza's post-war economy.**

Another approach comes from Arab states, and most notably Egypt, who seek

to position the Palestinian Authority at the centre of reconstruction. [Reuters reports](#) that these Arab actors are trying to counter proposals by the United States, but have not yet resolved key questions such as who will foot the bill and how Gaza will be governed.

What is more, even in this proposal, conditionality features heavily. Audits, security guarantees, and political oversight are all demanded. So far, every blueprint being proposed for Gaza has implicit strings within it, and very often explicit limits on Palestinian agency.

Meanwhile, [Trump's envoy](#) has publicly admitted that rebuilding Gaza may take ten to fifteen years, citing the sheer scale of destruction, the presence of unexploded ordnance, and the absence of water or electricity. The £53 billion cost estimate looks like a massive underestimate in that case.

Why who pays is inseparable from who rules

Three points emerge from this. The first is how scant the proposals are.

The second is the absence of European interest.

The third is the apparent denial of any responsibility on the part of Israel, which brought about this destruction.

These points matter because it would be a mistake to treat the issue of funding as a technical problem that is distinct from the issue of the future governance of Gaza and the West Bank. governance. The process of reconstruction will grant those undertaking the task immense influence and maybe power. As ever, how money flows is likely to determine who shapes society. That is what happens in the political economy.

That said, the conditionality of this funding is almost inevitable. Donors never hand over large sums without demands for oversight and controls. If reconstruction is, in that case, managed by foreign trustees or private intermediaries, as Trump implies should be the case, those conditions could amount to a de facto right to govern. In that case, exclusion is likely.

However, if in any scenario, Palestinians are marginalised in planning, or reduced to recipients rather than being the authors of the rebuilding of their own country, there is a real risk of a new form of technocratic occupation. The GREAT Trust scenario clearly suggests the reconstruction process might override local priorities in favour of investor or security agendas, but other proposals carry the same risk, albeit in different ways. Whatever happens, it might be that whoever contributes the most will likely demand the tightest controls.

In this context, Gaza's current, and inevitable, weak institutional base leaves it especially vulnerable. Without strong, transparent institutions and citizen oversight, it is

obvious that abuse could take place. How to address this issue is, then, an undeniable priority while also making clear that who pays is not just an arithmetic question; it is about who governs, who is empowered, and whose interests are inscribed in the rebuilt territory.

Norms and principles that must guide reconstruction

So, what should the ground rules for the rebuilding of Gaza be? My suggestions are as follows, for what they're worth.

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Liability must rest with the aggressor

Gaza was not destroyed by nature. It was destroyed by bombardment, siege, and military incursions. In any just reconstruction, the primary obligation lies with those who caused the destruction. Demanding reparations from Israel, and from those states materially complicit in what happened, must be the default approach to this issue, and not an afterthought if the people of Gaza are not to be made to suffer again for what has happened to them.

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Palestinian agency must be central, not peripheral

Every plan must centre on Palestinian institutions and civil society. Reconstruction must be Palestinian-led in design, implementation and oversight. External actors can assist, but must not supplant local decision-making. That the necessary skills exist, I do not doubt. The people of Gaza have proved their resilience.

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Donor funding should come with less sovereignty intrusion, not more

Conditions on transparency, oversight and accountability of funds provided are entirely legitimate. However, conditions on governance, political alignment, social design, or forced demographic change are most definitely not. Donors must resist micromanaging sovereignty.

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Strong accountability and real-time oversight are essential

Reconstruction must not be a black box. Independent audits, participatory monitoring, dispute mechanisms, and public redress must be built in from the start. This is not just for the sake of external donors. This is vital to rebuilding faith amongst the people of Gaza that they can take control of their own future in an accountable fashion, simultaneously rebuilding their confidence in their own systems of governance.

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Reconstruction must avoid displacement, demographic engineering, or exclusion

There must be no forced relocations, no land grabbing, and no engineered depopulation of communities in Gaza as a result of the rebuilding process. Reconstruction cannot be a cover for demographic restructuring. Israel's desire for ethnic cleansing must be seen to fail. That is essential to any plan. The ethic must be repair, restitution and restoration, but not erasure.

A possible roadmap and the tensions ahead

A just reconstruction process might then proceed along these lines:

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A reparations mechanism should be established, perhaps under United Nations auspices or an international tribunal, to hold Israel accountable for reconstruction costs.

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An Arab-led regional fund, backed by multilateral guarantees, should collect pledges to rebuild Gaza, maintaining regional agency rather than leaving control in distant capitals.

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Gaza's own institutions, whether they be the Palestinian Authority, its municipalities, or civil society bodies, must be central in planning, contracting, oversight and dispute resolution.

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Multilateral bodies such as the World Bank and UN agencies should provide technical capacity and credibility, but work with and report to the Palestinian Authority.

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A standing oversight body, maybe a Gaza Reconstruction Tribunal, should monitor contracts, manage disputes, and publish real-time transparency reports. This is vital.

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Any external investor involvement, including public-private partnerships, must be strictly regulated and subject to Palestinian oversight. Nothing less will do.

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Conditionality in funding must focus solely on accountability, anti-corruption and adherence to human rights and not on political alignment, security mandates or

demographic control.

In implementing such a process, tensions are bound to arise, but allowing those pressures to dictate the process would concede reconstruction as a terrain of domination. The rules of justice must be embedded in everything that has to be done, and justice in this case must mean justice for the people of Gaza who have already suffered more than enough.

The real choice we face

In the coming months, many people will try to shape Gaza's recovery, but the real question will always be not how to rebuild, but who will write the rules governing the rebuilding.

If reconstruction proceeds without reparations, without Palestinian sovereignty, and without genuine oversight, it will not deliver peace. It will entrench dependency. Gaza would, in that case, be redesigned to serve external interests rather than its own people. There will be no solution to what has happened in that case, and such a situation will only encourage the recurrence of conflict.

Rebuilding Gaza without justice is, then, not reconstruction at all. Would, instead, be preparation for the next round of conflict and destruction. If we are serious about a future in which Gaza is free, equitable and sustainable, four principles must hold. They are that:

- * The aggressor pays
- * The people of Gaza decide
- * Oversight is transparent, and
- * Reconstruction is grounded in repair, not conquest.

Then we might have hope. Is that possible? Time will tell.

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