





Paths to Peace Scenarios What Could Truly Stop the Gaza War

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Paths to Peace Scenarios: What Could Truly Stop the Gaza War

Abstract

This public brief—conducted by the Center of Leadership and Diplomacy (CLD)— summarizes six realistic ways the fighting could end, what each path would mean for civilians and for armed/non-armed resistance, and the signals to watch. It distills a scenario-planning study using Cross-Impact Analysis (CIA) and weighted probabilities to map the forces shaping outcomes. The three most plausible near-term endings are a short truce that risks relapse ($\approx 33\%$), a phased, monitored ceasefire ($\approx 27\%$), and Israeli unilateral drawdown + ongoing raids ($\approx 20\%$).

Introduction

After about two years of devastating violence, people naturally ask: *How could this war actually stop—and what happens next?* (The situation snapshot as of Aug 30, 2025)

- Mediation status: Hamas has publicly accepted a 60-day ceasefire with a partial hostage—prisoner exchange; Israel has not formally responded yet, per Qatari mediators and Reuters.
- US posture: The Trump administration is convening a White House meeting on Gaza's "day-after" while maintaining strong political backing for Israel; reporting also describes sanctions on ICC figures and continued arms relationships.
- "Day-after" ideas: Egypt is training PA-linked forces for a postwar Gaza security role (plan contingent on a ceasefire and political buy-in).
- Domestic pressures in Israel: Recent analysis and polling note major public support for a war-ending hostage deal and renewed operations ordered by the government.



This study—conducted by the Center of Leadership and Diplomacy (CLD)—uses scenario planning to lay out the most credible pathways, the forces that push each path forward or backward, and the likely consequences for ordinary lives. We identify the key drivers that

shape outcomes and explain, in plain language, what each stopping pathway would mean for Palestinians and for resistance dynamics. The study behind this brief identifies 12 key drivers, highlights the three most influential and three most dependent among them, and evaluates six stopping pathways with plain-language impacts for Palestinians and for resistance dynamics.

Methodology

The study followed two analysis methods:

- 1. Cross-Impact Analysis (CIA).
- List the key political, economic, social, technological, legal, and regional drivers (PESTLE).
- Assess how each driver pushes/pulls on the others to find which are most influential and which are most dependent.
- Use these relationships to spot leverage points (where actions matter most) and cascading risks.
- Weighted probabilities: Assign each stopping pathway a probability (likelihood) and a payoff (humanitarian outcome quality).

The forces (drivers) shaping the odds

The study found 12 key drivers as follows:

- 1. US leverage on Israel
- 2. Israeli coalition stability
- 3. Israeli security establishment posture
- 4. Humanitarian access & famine risk
- 5. Gaza governance transition plan
- 6. International legal pressure
- 7. Palestinian political unity
- 8. Regional actors (Egypt, Qatar)



- 9. Iranian involvement
- 10. Arab public opinion
- 11. EU & donor funding
- 12. Israeli public opinion

What most moves the outcome that is the most influence drivers are: U.S. leverage on Israel, Israeli coalition stability, and the posture of Israel's security establishment. While the most affected (dependent) areas are humanitarian access & famine risk, the Gaza governance transition plan, and international legal pressure. In short: Washington's choices, Israeli politics, and security assessments largely determine whether a ceasefire framework sticks; humanitarian access and governance are the first to feel the effects.

The main Scenarios the war could stop

- 1. **Phased ceasefire with monitored exchanges** a step-by-step deal (hostages & prisoners, verified IDF pullbacks, and sustained aid).
 - Impact on Palestinians: Sharp drop in mortality, large aid inflow, space for civil society & governance repairs; armed resistance shifts toward bargaining and deterrence rather than offense. (~27% likelihood)
- 2. **Short truce, then relapse** a limited pause with partial swaps but without a political framework. Then, relapse into fighting (temporary stop).
 - The Impact: Temporary relief; displacement and aid gaps persist; resistance reconstitutes; civilians see only short-lived improvement, and mistrust grow. (~33% likelihood)
- 3. **Israeli unilateral drawdown + ongoing raids.** This requires a Decision in Jerusalem to end major operations without a deal, with periodic strikes/raids continuing. That is formal stop but ongoing violence.
 - The Impact: casualties fall versus full war, but daily coercion, stalled reconstruction, and armed cells remain. (~20% likelihood)



4. **Imposed ceasefire (U.S./UN conditionality)** — external enforcement and monitoring (US announces conditionality/pauses; UNSC resolution & monitoring; allied coordination.).

The Impact: Rapid humanitarian stabilization; clearer protections; resistance is pressured to police spoilers and pivot politically. (~8% likelihood)

Ceasefire with interim governance/security ("trusteeship and Arab trained forces")
 services and policing under Arab/international backing, with accountability.

The Impact: Services and policing improve if sufficiently resourced; armed factions face demobilization/co-optation; legitimacy hinges on accountability and civil protection. (~7% likelihood).

6. No durable stop (full-scale war continues through year-end).

The Impact: High mortality/displacement; fragmentation and radicalization risks rise. (~5% likelihood)

What this means for people

- Sustained ceasefire: Fast mortality decline, greater aid throughput, pilot reconstruction, opening for unified Palestinian political strategy; armed resistance likely shifts to deterrent posture & political conditionality.
- Short truce: Lives saved in near term, but relapse risk keeps communities in limbo; resistance re-arms and public confidence erodes.
- Unilateral drawdown: Fewer mass-casualty events but persistent insecurity and economic strangulation; resistance devolves into low-intensity insurgency.
- Trusteeship role: Civilian gains if policing is rights-based and funding real; resistance factions face demobilization and split incentives (some co-opt, some spoil).
- No stop: Worst-case for civilians; resistance persists with higher fragmentation and extremization.



What to watch next regarding public signals

- Israeli cabinet formally approves a ceasefire framework.
- US conditionality or munitions pause publicly announced.
- ICRC-verified exchange volumes (hostages ↔ prisoners) in first 30–60 days.
- Arab-trained force operational readiness & political endorsement.
- Sustained aid flow (≥500 trucks/day for 30 days).
- Israeli public pressure for a deal remains very high

Conclusion

There is no single silver bullet—only several plausible off-ramps, each with trade-offs for civilian safety and political reality. The public should expect either a short truce (which saves lives briefly but risks relapse) or a phased, monitored ceasefire (the best shot at durable relief). Which path opens depends most on U.S. leverage, Israeli coalition dynamics, and a credible plan for governance and humanitarian access.