

Israel National News &gt; Opeds &gt; Resolving the Gaza "Custody Battle"

# Resolving the Gaza "Custody Battle"

## This might be the capstone of Trump's Mideast Peace Negotiations harkening back to the successes of his first term. Opinion.

Dr. Amy Neustein / Feb 6, 2025, 8:32 PM (GMT+2)

Gaza Region Dr. Amy Neustein Hostages in Gaza

ISRAEL NATIONAL NEWS  
🕒 2 minutes

Gaza beach

Courtesy

After years of tumult in Gaza, which culminated in Israel's 15-month war to destroy Hamas after their butchery of innocent Israelis on October 7, 2023 and their kidnapping over 200 hostages, we may finally see this beleaguered and desolate region morph into a prosperous land.

Likening the sunny strip to a "Riviera in the Middle East," images of a bustling international tourist hub – inhabited by "people of the world" – were presented last Tuesday night at an historic press conference held by President Donald Trump together with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

But like any protracted "custody battle" – whether it's a fight over raising young children or a fight over sovereignty of land – there are often third parties involved. Within hours of the jubilant press conference to announce the US "takeover" of Gaza and the potential of turning this war ravaged region into the crown jewel of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia publicly affirmed their support for a Palestinian Arab state as *sine qua non* to any normalization of relations with Israel.

In essence, by giving up "custody" of Gaza to the United States – a sensible way of removing the detritus around the neck of the Israelis who clearly see that Hamas cannot be eradicated – many fear that with Saudi Arabia pulling the strings Israel may be given no other choice than to accept a Palestinian state as its next-door neighbor.

It is uncontroversial that Saudi Arabia is driving a hard bargain and one must not accede. Saudi Arabia, acting *de facto* as a third party in this tense "custody battle" for Gaza, is trying to bootstrap the Jewish state into accepting a Hobson's choice: Israel gets rid of its Gaza nightmare (and the ensuing terror threats) in exchange for a Palestinian Arab state at its borders.

Similar to a custody battle that entails third party intervention in the resolution of an ongoing conflict (e.g., custody mediators, court-appointed experts, evaluators and so forth, often referred to as a "cottage industry"), regional conflicts seem to attract interlopers as well. However, just as with custody situations in which third parties can exacerbate conditions and place children at risk, in warfare, likewise, intervening parties may also cause significant harm.

So, if we remove Saudi Arabia – the unbidden third party that has officiously raised its voice of dissent – from the equation, we are left with a much brighter picture. With Egypt and Jordan continually rebuffing Trump's overtures in helping with absorption of the 1.8 million Gazans, Trump has moved ahead in considering Morocco, Puntland, and Somaliland as prospects for relocation of the Gazan population. In fact, Trump's stellar efforts in his first administration may prove to bear fruit today. Thanks to his fortitude and vision, Trump saw the immense value of the Abraham Accords – and now we might in fact reap the benefits.

Morocco, a participating party in a multi-nation foreign-policy agreement, signed a normalization agreement with Israel back in 2020 at the end of Trump's first term in office. This now gives license to Trump to approach Morocco, a country whose terrain is similar to Gaza, and ask Israel's diplomatic partner to assist in taking "custody" of the Gazans so that Israel will finally be free of the unremitting terrorist assaults on its population.

By overseeing Israel's establishment of formal diplomatic relations with Morocco, Trump may have unwittingly sowed the seeds in his first term for Israel's salvation during his second term. Without a crystal ball, as he could not possibly have seen the horrific massacre of October 7, Trump was guided by heavenly forces to forge ahead with normalization between Israel and its regional partners. And that can prove to be a life-saver in resolving the Gazan crisis today.

In fact, by architecting a multi-national arch of diplomacy, Trump's Abraham Accords enabled Israel to be free of dependency on one particular country. Though Saudi Arabia is a major regional power in the Middle East, they are just one entity in the Abraham Accords. And their dictates need not be obliged. In fact, if Israel were to abide by the dictates of Saudi Arabia, they'd pay a dear price by having a Palestinian Arab state next door.

This wouldn't bode well especially after having worked closely with Trump on the relocation of the Gazan population. It doesn't require clairvoyance to see that a newly-formed Palestinian Arab state would mete out the harshest form of "collective punishment" to the Jewish state, (falsely) claiming a "second Nakba" for their role in the supposed displacement of the Gazan population. Furthermore, given Saudi's major role in the Mideast, their aggressive campaigning for the rapid establishment of a Palestinian Arab state – which they've "coincidentally" broadened to include the Gaza Strip following Trump's declaration to have the US take over Gaza – would naturally embolden such an entity and pose an existential threat to Israel's survival.

Trump, a man who has courage and conviction, is not deterred by naysayers. He has invested much thought in building up Gaza as a prosperous waterfront haven in the Middle East, which some see as akin to Singapore. His visions for a "Riviera in the Middle East" will attract tourists who will easily cross over into Israel adding to the tourist economy of the Jewish state as well.

And as part of Trump's vision, he understands that the denizens of Gaza must be freed of the yoke of Hamas; and, instead, given a chance to enjoy a more habitable existence away from the rubble and wreckage. It will take time for the Gazans to adjust to their new life, because as we see today, Hamas has a noticeable grip on the entire population. Just two weeks ago we witnessed jeering crowds traumatize and ogle the hostages as they were being released from captivity in central Gaza. Civilians and Hamas terrorists stood shoulder-to-shoulder in this painful spectacle of humiliation of the hostages, some of whom were pitifully emaciated after being kept in tunnels for months, by voyeuristic onlookers.

Understandably, one cannot rebuild Gaza when it's infested by terrorists who are tightly interwoven with the civilian population that has haplessly or willingly succumbed to them.

Trump certainly made it clear at the press conference last week that maintaining the status quo is not a solution. He laid the groundwork during his first term, assiduously working on ways to rival the Iran-backed axis of resistance in fortifying an arch of diplomacy to suppress radical Islamic ideology pervasive in the Middle East.

In entering his second term, he is met with a dismantled and disempowered axis of evil thanks to Israel's extraordinary military and defense prowess over the past 15 months. Both Israel and Trump are now in a very good space. Both have earned it through hard work. It's time to ride the crest of the wave and enjoy the successes that have paved the way for a safe and vital Jewish state for now and forever.

**Amy Neustein, Ph.D.,** a sociologist, and author/editor of 16 academic books. Her most recent publication, *"From Madness to Mutiny: Why Mothers are Running from the Family Courts,"* is June 2025, Oxford University Press. She is the co-editor of *"Forensic Speaker Recognition: Law Enforcement and Counter-Terrorism"* (Springer 2011). The book is used to train FBI agents across the United States. She resides in Fort Lee, NJ.