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Maintaining a path to Palestinian statehood

How to restore political legitimacy, reform institutions and coordinate international action

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Summary

- The remaining 13 months of the transition period established by UN Security Council Resolution 2803 (UNSCR 2803) could determine Palestine's political future for a generation and is likely to shape the peace and security objectives of regional and international stakeholders. While the resolution makes reference to a pathway to Palestinian statehood, realizing that outcome will depend on Israel and Hamas fulfilling their obligations, as well as progress in Palestinian political renewal and the institutional reintegration of Gaza and the West Bank. Success should not be measured by whether a Palestinian state emerges before December 2027, but by whether the conditions necessary for statehood remain attainable.
- Palestinian institutions require political re-legitimation, not simply technical reform. President Mahmoud Abbas currently occupies four leadership positions, but there is no coherent sustainable framework governing succession within the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Palestinian Authority (PA), the State of Palestine, or Fatah. These institutions need guidance on how to work together in general, not only in the event of each one being headed by a different person. The 2026 electoral calendar has generated widespread scepticism and reopened debate about political renewal, succession, legislative reform, the dominance of Fatah and even competing visions for the character and governance of a future Palestinian state. The recent postponement of elections to September 2027 has only compounded misgivings.
- The interim constitution-drafting process, initiated in response to broader international recognition of Palestine, has spawned important debate on the state of Palestinian politics and national priorities. Public consultations will play a pivotal role in creating a transitional constitution that can be supported by a broad swathe of Palestinian society. Consultations must be inclusive, transparent, accessible and reflected in the end product. Broad consultations are vital for generating the public confidence and shared national purpose needed for durable Palestinian-led reform.
- The PA's fiscal crisis is one of the most important factors determining whether meaningful reform is possible. Israel's near-total withholding of clearance revenues has pushed Palestinian public debt to unsustainable levels, while uncertainty surrounding correspondent-banking arrangements threatens further economic disruption. International actors have a crucial role in enabling cross-border financial services. Without a viable fiscal foundation, efforts to improve governance, strengthen institutions and advance political renewal are unlikely to succeed.

- Gaza's transitional governance arrangements under the Board of Peace and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) should complement existing Palestinian institutions to avoid evolving into a separate governing system. The PA itself was established in 1994 as a temporary five-year arrangement but became a permanent feature of the Palestinian political landscape. Similar dynamics could emerge in Gaza if international assistance bypasses Palestinian institutions in favour of parallel donor-led mechanisms, or if a phased, zone-based approach to reconstruction deepens the political and administrative separation between Gaza and the West Bank.
- Regional and international actors retain significant influence over the transition period, but they do not apply it consistently. Arab states broadly support the PA as the eventual centre of Palestinian governance, although they differ over Hamas's future role and the use of financial conditionality. The UK, EU and US continue to promote reform benchmarks, but externally defined conditions risk constraining Palestinian agency, especially when implementation depends on Israeli approval. The more than 150 states that recognize Palestine possess meaningful diplomatic leverage, but these efforts will remain largely symbolic unless they are coordinated and translated into practical political, economic and institutional support.

01 Introduction

UN Security Council Resolution 2803 offers a narrow opportunity to preserve the pathway to Palestinian statehood. The resolution's viability depends on Palestinian political renewal, unified governance and coordinated international support, despite the constraints posed by the continued Israeli occupation.

Sovereign statehood has long been the objective of the Palestinian national project. Although the State of Palestine is now recognized by more than 150 countries,[1] recognition has not resolved fundamental issues concerning territorial scope, governance arrangements, or the political process required to give statehood practical effect. UN Security Council Resolution 2803 (UNSCR 2803)[2] provides a distinct framework for addressing these issues. The challenge is whether the steps taken for its implementation can preserve the conditions necessary for a viable Palestinian state and enable Palestinians to determine the territory's political and institutional future.

The decisions taken during the remaining 13 months of the initial transition period established by UNSCR 2803 will be critical in shaping the political future of Palestine for a generation, as well as the peace and security goals of interested regional and international actors.[3] The period until December 2027 offers a limited and highly constrained opportunity to keep the pathway to statehood open. This requires Israel and Hamas to fulfil their obligations, alongside progress on Palestinian political renewal, credible mechanisms for leadership succession and democratic legitimacy, and institutional reintegration between Gaza and

1 Ali, M. (2025), 'Which are the 150+ countries that have recognised Palestine as of 2025?', Al Jazeera, 23 September 2025, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/9/23/which-are-the-150-countries-that-have-recognised-palestine-as-of-2025.
2 United Nations Security Council (2025), 'Resolution 2803 (2025)', S/RES/2803 (2025), 17 November 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2803(2025.
3 UNSC Resolution 2803 was adopted on 17 November 2025. It endorses the US-backed Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict – also known as President Trump's 20-point plan for Gaza. Article 8 of the resolution authorizes the transitional security and governance bodies in Gaza until December 2027 subject to further action by the UNSC.

the West Bank. Crucially, reform must be Palestinian owned, while international support must be coordinated and directed towards unified Palestinian governance, rather than parallel or externally controlled structures.

Against this backdrop, this research paper examines how the official Palestinian leadership can use the initial transition period to preserve the conditions necessary for statehood to remain attainable. While implementation of the resolution largely depends on the US, Israel and Hamas, progress towards Palestinian statehood is constrained both politically and economically by Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. This structural constraint is heightened by a right-wing Israeli government that openly rejects both a Palestinian state and the Palestinian Authority (PA).[4] Although the Israeli elections on 27 October 2026 may produce a different government, the outcome is unlikely to result in significant or meaningful immediate changes in policies towards the Palestinian state and institutions. Within this challenging environment, the paper focuses on the Palestinian leadership's capacity to prepare for credible elections, undertake institutional reform, and rebuild the domestic and international legitimacy required to govern a reunified Palestinian territory.

Reform will carry weight only if it is owned and driven from within, grounded in Palestinian national interests rather than imposed by external powers.

Despite its many shortcomings,[5] UNSC Resolution 2803 provides a narrow window of opportunity for Palestinian institutional renewal, one that requires urgent attention before developments on the ground make progress virtually impossible. Reform will carry weight only if it is owned and driven from within, grounded in Palestinian national interests rather than imposed by external powers. We argue that reform is an opportunity for Palestinians to revitalize national institutions and clarify national priorities.

Moreover, any interim governing arrangement in Gaza must sit within a clear political, legal, economic and administrative relationship with the PA and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the West Bank.[6] Without this connection, governance in Gaza will develop on a separate track from the West Bank, deepening territorial division and further weakening the foundations of statehood.

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4 The Palestinian Authority (PA), referred to by Palestinian official documents as the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), established under the Oslo Accords in 1994 as an interim self-government body, administers public services and exercises limited governing powers in parts of the occupied West Bank.
5 Weller, M. (2025), 'What is Security Council Resolution 2803, and what does it mean for the Trump Gaza plan?', Chatham House Explainer, 21 November 2025, https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/11/what-security-council-resolution-2803-and-what-does-it-mean-trump-gaza-plan.
6 The PLO was officially recognized by the Arab League as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people at the Rabat Summit in 1974 and was granted observer status at the Arab League. League of Arab States (1974), 'PLO sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people – LAS Rabat Summit – resolution', *United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine*, 28 October 1974, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-194621.

However, external powers, particularly regional and European states, matter because they can provide political support, funding and institutional backing that Palestinian reform cannot generate alone. Regional capitals retain influence over Palestinian actors and can exercise agency and leverage in setting the terms for how Gaza's governance and security is brought under the umbrella of the PA and the PLO. Furthermore, Europe remains central to sustaining Palestinian institutions. The continent is the principal provider of budgetary support and technical assistance, and it continues to promote governance standards for longer-term state-building.

International and regional powers continue to see the PA as the main governing body for Palestinians. The PA is expected to assume responsibility for Gaza after the transitional period and to lead Palestinians towards statehood. This expectation places reform at the centre of the transitional process, as the PA's ability to govern Gaza and advance a credible pathway to statehood will depend on its willingness and capacity to undertake meaningful institutional change. This research paper therefore assesses whether this role is viable under current conditions and what would be required for the PA to fulfil it in practice.

Chapters 2 and 3 assess what President Mahmoud Abbas referred to as the 'year of Palestinian democracy',[7] examining elections, constitutional debates and efforts to renew political representation and strengthen domestic legitimacy. Chapter 4 explores how external actors influence Palestinian reform and governance through political engagement, financing and conditionality, and whether their support strengthens Palestinian institutions. Chapter 5 analyses the Board of Peace and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), examining the implications of Gaza's transitional governance arrangements for Palestinian agency, institutional unity and statehood. Chapter 6 draws together the findings and identifies the minimum conditions required to preserve a viable pathway to Palestinian statehood. The final chapter consolidates the research paper's recommendations by actor and time frame, setting out priorities for Palestinian leaders, Arab states and international partners.

Throughout, the paper focuses on the relationship between Palestinian agency and the role of regional and international actors. These actors influence developments through funding, security coordination and political recognition, but that influence is uneven and at times contradictory. Outcomes during the transition period will depend on the actions of international actors, the constraints imposed by continued Israeli occupation and on how the Palestinian leadership responds. This will determine the PA's capacity to govern Gaza and whether a viable path to statehood remains.

The time frame is tight and the risks are considerable. Developments in the West Bank continue to undermine the territorial basis for a future Palestinian state, while temporary governance arrangements in Gaza risk hardening into permanent features of authority. This research paper offers recommendations on what can be done to preserve the conditions necessary for Palestinian statehood to remain attainable.

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7 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas says 2026 will be the year of Palestinian democracy', 8 January 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/165981.

Methodology

This research paper draws on both secondary and primary research. The secondary research involved a review of existing literature, including academic articles, policy reports, media coverage, and relevant publications on Palestinian governance and leadership reform.

Primary research was conducted over the course of the study period. Between December 2025 and June 2026, the research team held in-depth interviews and consultations with a wide range of interlocutors, including former government officials, civil society actors, political activists and professionals engaged in Palestinian leadership reform. These conversations were complemented by discussions with regional and international experts with deep knowledge of the subject and proximity to key decision-makers. Given the rapidly evolving political environment – in which Palestinian local elections, elections within the ruling party Fatah (the most dominant faction of the PLO) and a constitution-drafting process have taken place – many of these exchanges took the form of repeat interviews and ongoing discussions between July and October, allowing the research team to track shifting dynamics and capture the most current assessments from those closest to events on the ground. A glossary of key terms is provided at the end of the paper for reference.

In addition to one-to-one interviews, the research team convened a series of expert workshops bringing together practitioners and analysts to interrogate and stress-test the findings and arguments developed in this paper. This iterative and consultative approach was central to the methodology: rather than treating the research as a single-pass exercise, the team returned repeatedly to its interlocutors as circumstances changed, ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in real-time developments. In accordance with the Chatham House Rule, the views expressed by participants in interviews and workshops are not attributed to named individuals or their affiliated organizations, enabling frank and candid exchange. All findings, conclusions and recommendations in this paper remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

02 Palestinian leadership reforms

The Palestinian leadership faces overlapping challenges of succession, representation and legitimacy. Meeting them will require an inclusive process of political renewal that responds to Palestinian priorities and is supported by a credible pathway towards statehood.

Palestinian institutions require political re-legitimation, not only administrative or technical reform. The pattern traced below, from the Oslo Accords through more than three decades of technocratic governance experiments to today's leadership, electoral and constitutional questions, illustrate a consistent lesson: administrative fixes alone have failed.

The international community has consistently prioritized Palestinian governing bodies led by officials selected for administrative and technical competence, which have focused on service delivery, public finances and institutional management rather than political mobilization, as a means of advancing a two-state solution.

The Oslo Accords, signed between Israel and the PLO in 1993 and 1995, established the PA,[8] which had limited governing powers and was originally intended to be in place for an interim period of five years.[9] A decade later, in 2003, the Quartet Roadmap introduced the position of prime minister in the PA to constrain Yasser Arafat,[10] who remained president. In his statement, US president George W. Bush publicly preconditioned the founding of a Palestinian state on establishing 'a new and different Palestinian leadership' and 'entirely new political and economic

8 Palestinian official documents refer to the Palestinian Authority as the 'Palestinian National Authority' (PNA).
9 UN General Assembly (1993), 'Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (Oslo I Accord)', https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/il20ps930913declaration principlesnterimself-government28oslo20accords29.pdf.
10 UN (2003), 'Quartet Principals Meeting, Statement', European Union/The Quartet, 23 June 2003, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-204454.

institutions'.[11] Mahmoud Abbas was appointed as the first prime minister and afterward assumed the presidency through the 2005 elections that followed Arafat's death in 2004. Three years later, in 2007, then-prime minister Salam Fayyad led a technocratic PA government based in the West Bank, which was set up as a 'national emergency' response after Hamas's takeover of Gaza.[12] A similar logic informed the Palestinian National Consensus Government in 2014 under Rami Hamdallah, as a result of a reconciliation agreement brokered by Egypt and Qatar.[13] However, this was also a short-lived endeavour. In 2024, a technocratic government led by Mohammad Mustafa was formed under external pressure in the context of the Gaza war following 7 October 2023.[14] More recently, in January 2026, the Trump administration's Board of Peace (BoP) established the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG) (see Chapter 5) to serve as 'a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee, responsible for delivering the day-to-day running of public services and municipalities for the people in Gaza'.[15]

A consistent pattern runs through these cases. The international community has used technocratic governance to sideline political actors deemed unacceptable, including Yasser Arafat and Hamas, while leaving the underlying drivers of the conflict unaddressed and deprioritizing Palestinian democratic legitimacy. Israel has alternated between tolerating and obstructing these arrangements, depending on whether they strengthen Palestinian political authority. Palestinian factions excluded from each process have contested the legitimacy of these efforts and challenged their outcomes. In each case, the gap between technocratic administration and genuine political sovereignty has remained unresolved.

What has been missing from these processes is empowered, representative and inclusive Palestinian agency, working towards a clear and agreed national goal. This pattern has contributed to a growing conviction within Palestinian society that without coherent political agency, no sustainable political pathway can emerge.[16]

Interviews conducted for this paper show that long-standing concerns about the weakening of key institutions have prompted a broader internal debate about the future of Palestinian politics. This has centred on whether existing political structures remain viable and capable of advancing the national project, with closer scrutiny of their structure, purpose and effectiveness. For many Palestinians, as demonstrated by extensive polling, needed governance reform extends beyond technical fixes

11 The White House of George W. Bush (2002), 'President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership', 24 June 2002, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html.
12 BBC News (2007), 'Profile: Salam Fayyad', 17 June 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6757273.stm.
13 Economic Cooperation Foundation (ECF) (2014), 'Fatah-Hamas Reconciliation Agreement (April 2014)', https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/1190.
14 Taha, S. and Taylor, A. (2024), 'Palestinian Authority announces new cabinet amid U.S. pressure', *Washington Post*, 28 March 2024, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/03/28/palestinian-authority-cabinet-abbas-gaza-west-bank.
15 Point 9 of President's Trump 20-point plan, BBC News (2025), 'Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan in full', 30 September 2025, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c70155nked7o; Barron, R. (2026), 'What Comes Next for Gaza and Trump's Board of Peace', Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, 29 January 2026, https://doi.org/10.25613/3qaw-w390.
16 Research interview with a senior former Palestinian official, under the condition of anonymity, May 2026.

to deeper questions of representation, accountability and political purpose. From their perspective, reform centres on the need for political legitimacy, national unity and the conduct of credible parliamentary and presidential elections.[17]

This includes establishing an inclusive leadership and creating a process that actively engages Palestinian youth. Such an approach is consistent with the broader argument that Palestinian reform depends on domestic resonance and a viable diplomatic horizon, as technocratic measures alone cannot generate legitimacy.[18]

At the same time, the internationally driven reform agenda for Palestinian governance is met with strong scepticism by those directly affected by it. Interviews with Palestinian and regional official and non-official interlocutors point to a prevailing perception that Israel, the US and other Western actors have instrumentalized demands for PA reform to discredit the Palestinian leadership, avoid dealing with the underlying causes of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and delay progress towards statehood.[19] Consequently, internationally driven reform is widely considered to be an open-ended condition imposed on a Palestinian leadership constrained by occupation and denied political agency, rather than a pathway to Palestinian statehood.

There is nevertheless broad recognition, among both Palestinian constituencies and the international community that reform of the Palestinian leadership is necessary, not least if progress towards statehood is to remain plausible.

Current internationally driven reform efforts are tied to a set of overlapping external frameworks, including President Trump's peace plan in 2020 and the Saudi-French Proposal as per UNSCR 2803,[20] and the Palestinian–EU reform matrix, as agreed with the PA in November 2024.[21] These initiatives have created layered and at times competing expectations of what reform should entail.

As a result, the PA is expected to undertake comprehensive change to satisfy local, regional and international audiences, even as the requirements and underlying motivations of these actors diverge, adding further complexity to the process.

One thing is clear. Hamas's attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 and the war that followed in Gaza have stripped the Palestinian national project back to first principles. In the aftermath, a wide debate has emerged within Palestinian society, among intellectuals, activists and diaspora communities, on the need to reassess the path to liberation and statehood. Central to this debate is the condition of Palestinian political leadership and its ability to give direction and an energized vision and strategy to the national project.[22]

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17 Shikaki, K. and Ladadweh, W. (2025), *Reforming the Palestinian Authority: The Chasm Between International Dictates and Palestinian Aspirations*, Critical Policy Brief number 2/2025, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/1004.
18 Brown, N. (2025), 'Can Palestinian Politics Be Revived?', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 24 September 2025, https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/09/palestinian-politics-reform-elections-international-support.
19 Interviews with Palestinian, regional official and non-official interlocuters (2025–2026).
20 United Nations Security Council (2025), 'Resolution 2803 (2025)'.
21 EU Commission (2025), 'Palestine Donor Group: EU leads international efforts for strong and viable Palestinian governance', https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/bg/ip_25_2771.
22 Rahman, O. H. and Rabbani, M. (eds) (2026), *Rupture and Representation: The Palestinian National Movement After October 7*, Middle East Council on Global Affairs, https://mecouncil.org/publication/rupture-and-representation-the-palestinian-national-movement-after-october-7.

The PA's fiscal crisis

The PA's fiscal crisis is not one constraint among several, but arguably the single largest determinant of whether reform, and preparation to govern Gaza, are possible at all. A PA unable to pay salaries reliably, manage its exposure to Israeli banks, or maintain access to the international banking system cannot sustain institutional reform, nor extend services into Gaza. Israel's near-total withholding of clearance revenues, taxes and customs duties collected on the PA's behalf, which have historically covered around two-thirds of its income, has been the immediate trigger. Transfers were effectively halted through much of 2025 and into 2026,[23] forcing the PA to pay only a portion of public sector wages while arrears accumulate. By late 2025, the PA owed roughly $2.5 billion to public employees and the pension fund, $1.6 billion to private suppliers, and $4.8 billion in domestic bank debt,[24] pushing total indebtedness to $14.6 billion, which is 106 per cent of the PA's 2024 GDP.[25]

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A newer and more destabilizing risk has since emerged. In July 2026, Israel's two largest banks, Bank Hapoalim and Israel Discount Bank, notified Palestinian banks of their intention to terminate correspondent-banking relationships – essentially disabling the ability of Palestinian banks to provide cross-border financial services – from September and October 2026, respectively, after Israel's finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, narrowed the legal indemnities protecting the Israeli banks from liability.[26] The deadline for termination was later extended to the end of the year.

The Palestinian banking system remains structurally tied to Israeli banks and the shekel, under the 1994 Paris Protocol.[27] Any disruption to these arrangements is likely to affect the financing of fuel, medicine and food imports, as well as the payment of wages well beyond the PA's own payroll. This systemic risk has prompted explicit warnings from the World Bank and international monitors.[28]

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23 Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) (2026), 'Palestine Economic Update', January 2026, https://mas.ps/en/publications/13644.html.
24 World Bank (2025), 'PFRD1 Review: July–September 2025 Fiscal Performance', West Bank and Gaza, October, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099607401142639529/pdf/IDU-266ed6af-853b-473f-914e-.
25 Samhouri, M. (2026), 'Running on Empty: The Deepening Fiscal Crisis of the Palestinian Authority', Arab Center Washington DC, 12 February 2026, https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/running-on-empty-the-deepening-fiscal-crisis-of-the-palestinian-authority.
26 Scheer, S. and Sawafta, A. (2026), 'Concerns of Palestinian economic crisis grow as Israeli banks prepare to cut ties', Reuters, 23 July 2026, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/concerns-palestinian-economic-crisis-grow-israeli-banks-prepare-cut-ties-2026-07-23.
27 UNCTAD (1994), 'Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the P.L.O., representing the Palestinian people', 29 April 1994, https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ParisProtocol_en.pdf.
28 International Crisis Group (2026), *Chokehold: Countering Israel's Grip on the West Bank Economy*, Middle East Report No. 255, 19 June 2026, https://www.crisisgroup.org/rpt/middle-east-north-africa/israelpalestine/255-chokehold-countering-israels-grip-west-bank-economy.

These pressures compound a further unresolved question. The respective financial responsibilities of the PA and transitional bodies such as the NCAG have not been clearly defined, leaving uncertainty over who will bear the costs of administering and rebuilding Gaza as these responsibilities grow. How reconstruction financing is designed matters as much as its volume. If international assistance is channelled through parallel, donor-managed mechanisms that bypass Palestinian institutions, it risks weakening the PA's institutional authority at precisely the moment when reform depends on demonstrating its capacity to govern effectively. This concern is not new. Analysts have warned that weak oversight of Gaza-specific financing mechanisms could deepen the territorial separation that the transition is intended to overcome.[29]

The central challenge for Palestinian leaders is to take ownership of the reform agenda rather than accept it as an externally imposed condition. Doing so would enable them to use reform as a means of shaping the external environment and advancing Palestinian interests, rather than remaining the object of external pressures and events.

A reform agenda that comes from within Palestinian institutions will carry greater legitimacy, prove more durable in implementation and be harder for external actors to selectively interpret or instrumentalize. Without this grounding, reform risks being defined and controlled from outside, limiting Palestinian ownership and weakening its long-term effectiveness.

Political leadership

The formal Palestinian leadership is composed of three principal structures. The PLO, founded in 1964,[30] is recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and was formally acknowledged by Israel under the 1993 Oslo Accords. The PA, which was established through the same set of agreements, functions as an interim governing authority.[31] The Palestinian presidency constitutes a third component of the leadership structure. All three institutions are dominated by a single political faction, Fatah, and exercise only limited authority within parts of the West Bank.

Currently, President Mahmoud Abbas (who is 90 years old) holds four leadership positions serving as head of the PLO, the PA, Fatah and the State of Palestine.[32] Many fear that once the president's position becomes vacant, competition within Fatah and among other Palestinian factions could trigger a power struggle, which would disrupt a peaceful transition and deepen political divisions.

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29 Hassan, Z. (2026), 'Board Up Donald Trump's Failed Board of Peace', Diwan, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 17 June 2026, https://carnegieendowment.org/middle-east/diwan/2026/06/board-up-trumps-failed-board-of-peace.
30 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2011), '47 years since PLO's establishment', 29 May 2011, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/111197.
31 European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) (2001), 'Report on the Evolution of the Legal Framework of National Palestinian Authority', UN, 20 March 2001, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-209986.
32 Office of the President of the State of Palestine (undated), 'Biography', https://president.ps/Eng/OfficialResume.

The legal framework for institutional leadership succession has undergone significant changes in the past two years. A number of Palestinians who were interviewed for this paper viewed the updated procedures as an attempt to maintain and consolidate key power positions within Fatah.[33]

While institutional rules are largely in place to govern the succession process, ambiguity continues to prevail when it comes to the State of Palestine.

Therefore, leadership succession is a pressing concern. Indeed, Palestinian interlocutors we spoke to noted that it is one of the key national agenda items in need of urgent attention. Current succession mechanisms for leadership transition in the PLO, PA, Fatah and the State of Palestine are as follows:

— **The PLO** – The PLO is headed by the chairperson of the organization's 18-member executive committee (EC). The PLO's statute does not explicitly address the vacancy of the chairperson.[34] Article 13 generally states that the EC chairperson is elected by the EC. It is worth noting that the PLO National Council (PNC) or the Central Council (PCC) elects the executive committee members.[35]

  In April 2025, the PLO created a new position of EC deputy chairperson,[36] though critics saw this as a response to Arab and international pressure on President Abbas to appoint a deputy in an attempt to shore up the succession process.[37] President Abbas appointed Hussein al-Sheikh to the position. However, the decision to appoint a deputy did not explicitly state that the deputy would assume the position of PLO chairperson in case of a vacancy. Therefore, the creation of this position leaves the existing arrangements for selecting a new chairperson unchanged.

— **The PA** – Under a constitutional declaration issued by President Abbas in October 2025,[38] if the office of the PA president becomes vacant while there is no Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the deputy chair of the PLO EC, who also serves as vice president of the State of Palestine, assumes the duties of the PA president. The interim period lasts 90 days and can be renewed once, pending presidential elections.[39] This provision recognizes that the PLC, which was suspended in 2007 and then dissolved in 2018, is no longer functional and removes it from the succession process, transferring authority to the PLO framework instead.

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33 Interviews with Palestinian civil society members, under the condition of anonymity, March–June 2026.
34 PLO National Council (2017), 'PLO Statute' [in Arabic], https://www.palestinepnc.org/alnzam-alasasy-lmnzmt-althryr.
35 PNC is the legislative authority within the PLO, which represents all Palestinians. The PCC was established in 1973 to function as an intermediary body between the PNC and the EC. In 2018, the PNC formally transferred its legislative powers to the PCC including the power to elect EC members. See Mapping Palestinian Politics (undated), 'Palestinian Central Council (PCC)', European Council on Foreign Relations, https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/central_council.
36 WAFA Palestine News & Info Agency (2025), 'Palestinian Central Council overwhelmingly decides to establish deputy chairman position', 24 April 2025, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/156799.
37 The New Arab (2025), 'Mahmoud Abbas's appointment of Hussein al-Sheikh as deputy sparks Palestinian divisions', 27 April 2025, https://www.newarab.com/news/mahmoud-abbas-faces-backlash-over-hussein-al-sheikh-appointment.
38 WAFA Palestine News & Info Agency (2025), 'Constitutional Declaration No. (1) of 2025 (Palestine) (Arabic)', 27 October 2025, https://info.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/35917.
39 Al Arabiya English (2025), 'Abbas issues declaration for Vice President to assume leadership in case of vacancy', 26 October 2025, https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2025/10/26/abbas-issues-declaration-for-vice-president-to-assume-leadership-in-case-of-vacancy.

- **Fatah** – Fatah is headed by the chairperson of the 23-member Fatah Central Committee (FCC). As stipulated in Fatah's internal charter of 2009 (Article 41),[40] the chair and 18 FCC members are elected by the Fatah General Conference while the additional four members are proposed by the chairperson and must be approved by two-thirds of the FCC and endorsed by Fatah's Revolutionary Council (Fatah's governing body). The charter does not explicitly stipulate the process in case of a vacancy but implies that the leadership seat would be occupied by the deputy chairperson as interim until the next general conference is convened.[41] On 3 June 2026, during the first meeting of the recently elected FCC, Hussein al-Sheikh was elected as Fatah's deputy leader.[42]
- **President of the State of Palestine** – There are no specific rules or a constitutional structure that govern the appointment of the president of the State of Palestine. In 2005, Mahmoud Abbas was elected as president of the PA and in 2008 he was officially confirmed by the PLO's PCC as the president of the State of Palestine.[43] A 2013 presidential decree stipulated that the 'State of Palestine' should officially replace the term PA and that the State of Palestine logo be used on all Palestinian official documents and transactions. This decision followed the UN general assembly's recognition of Palestine as a state. The overlap may suggest that the governing succession rules of the PA presidency apply to the State of Palestine. However, electoral experts interviewed for this paper highlighted the ambiguity resulting from the interchangeable use of the terms 'President of the PA' and 'President of the State of Palestine' adding that the successor to the national leadership role would most likely require PLO approval in the form of PCC designation as president of the state, in order to claim domestic authority.

The serving president's advanced age and the critical juncture of the Palestinian national project increase the urgency of establishing transparent, professional and credible succession mechanisms in all Palestinian political institutions.

A Palestinian constitutional expert interviewed for this paper noted that constitutional declarations affecting succession processes were introduced unilaterally by the sitting president, without oversight from legislative bodies or the judiciary.[44] Interlocutors noted that the president's reliance on these unilateral measures has compounded the loss of public trust in the political system and its leadership. Unilateral presidential decrees and constitutional amendments are no substitute for a functioning parliamentary system (the PLC) or for a political

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40 Friendfoe.org (2025), 'Fatah Internal Charter 2009', translation, https://friendfoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/fatah-charter-annotated.pdf.
41 Article 43 of the Fatah Internal Charter stipulates that the deputy chair is elected by the FCC and article 45 assigns the deputy the chairperson's tasks in case of the latter's absence. Friendfoe.org (2025), 'Fatah Internal Charter 2009'.
42 Bsharat, L. (2026), 'Palestinian movement Fatah elects Hussein al-Sheikh as deputy leader', Anadolu Agency, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/palestinian-movement-fatah-elects-hussein-al-sheikh-as-deputy-leader/3955910.
43 This decision drew criticism from Palestinian officials, see The Palestinian Information Center (2008), 'Shak'a slams Central Council for appointing Abbas president of Palestine', 25 November 2008, https://english.palinfo.com/o_post/Shaka-a-slams-Central-Council-for-appointing-Abbas-president-of-Palestine.
44 Interview with a Palestinian constitutional expert, West Bank (via Zoom), under the condition of anonymity, March 2026. On 22 December 2018, President Abbas declared that the Constitutional Court decided to dissolve the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and called for legislative elections, which have yet to take place. The measure was criticised by Palestinian institutions and political groups. Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) (2019), 'Position Paper: Constitutional Court's Decision to Dissolve PLC is Political and Illegal', https://pchrgaza.org/position-paper-constitutional-courts-decision-to-dissolve-plc-is-political-and-illegal.

environment conducive to national elections. Therefore, a transparent mechanism for inclusive consultation with relevant segments of Palestinian society is needed to ensure that decisions command broader legitimacy and are not taken unilaterally.

Legal experts we spoke to described a 'three-body problem'[45] within the system, referring to the lack of a clear framework to regulate relations between its three main institutions: 'The way things stand, the PLO represents all Palestinians, including the diaspora, the PA receives international funds and the State of Palestine engages in diplomatic relations, but there is no framework to coordinate the relationship between all three.'[46] Without agreed rules to govern relations between them, it remains unclear how decisions would be made on behalf of the Palestinian people if the PLO and the PA were led by different individuals, a plausible outcome under current succession arrangements. In essence, Palestine's body politic is currently managed by one person. When he leaves his posts, there will be no system to coordinate how the different entities would work together.

In essence, Palestine's body politic is currently managed by one person. When he leaves his posts, there will be no system to coordinate how the different entities would work together.

This points to the need for Palestinian lawmakers and policymakers to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing legislative framework, including the Palestinian Basic Law of 2003,[47] subsequent presidential decrees and constitutional amendments, to establish a clear, credible and coherent legal and institutional framework consistent with democratic principles. For the best chance of success, the process must be grounded in inclusive consultations with political factions and civil society organizations and treated as a priority within a programme of genuine reform. Consultations conducted with experts and the wider public as part of the constitutional process must feed into this debate. The constitution drafting and related consultations are an opportune platform for identifying the existing gaps and consolidating the legislative and institutional frameworks.

The acceleration of territorial loss through Israeli annexation and settlement policies, coupled with the scale of fatalities and destruction in Gaza, should serve as a catalyst for Palestinian political factions to move beyond internal rivalries, come together and form a national strategy to address pressing priorities including preserving unity between the West Bank and Gaza. Hamas, alongside Fatah

45 In reference to the 'three-body problem' that describes the difficulty in predicting the motion of three celestial bodies interacting through gravity, the analogy here relates to the complexity of relations between three institutions whose respective powers and interactions are not clearly regulated. Interview with a Palestinian constitutional expert, Chatham House, under the condition of anonymity, 13 July 2026.
46 Interview with a Palestinian constitutional expert, West Bank, via zoom, under the condition of anonymity, March 2026.
47 CODICES (2026), '2003 Amended Basic Law', Council of Europe, https://codices.coe.int/codices/documents/constitution/0e3ea033-907f-4daf-b05d-33fc6f2c7e0a.

and other Palestinian groups, should be part of discussions on political renewal and the future of the national project. While deep differences remain, the goal of self-determination exists as potential common ground.

A realistic starting point would be for the leadership to initiate a comprehensive, inclusive and structured dialogue that brings together the PA, major political factions, civil society organizations, and representatives from Gaza, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, refugee communities in neighbouring countries, and the wider diaspora.

The objective should not be to resolve all differences immediately, but to build consensus around a limited forward-looking set of national priorities, governance reforms and arrangements for elections.

Palestinian leadership, institutions and society should then move to translate these arrangements within the framework of UNSCR 2803 and produce a detailed, workable national action plan with clear objectives, structures, timelines, roles and responsibilities. Without such an effort, Palestinian decision-making is likely to remain fragmented, limiting its ability to influence transitional governance arrangements and weakening its capacity to respond to the risks posed by continued conflict, occupation and potential annexation.

Active international and regional support for this effort, particularly from the US and Arab countries, is essential. Without it, Israel will most likely obstruct this initiative.

03 The year of Palestinian democracy

The emergence of an electoral calendar has raised expectations of political renewal. However, restrictions on participation, deep political divisions and occupation all limit the prospects for restoring legitimacy and rebuilding the national project.

The failure to hold elections has come to define the current political impasse in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT). With the last national elections taking place in 2006,[48] no Palestinian under the age of 38 has ever voted in nationwide elections in the West Bank or Gaza. Young Palestinian civil society leaders interviewed by the authors singled out the generational gap between the leadership in power and the majority of would-be voters, noting that it restricts political renewal and sustains stagnation.[49]

Under mounting domestic and international pressure President Abbas declared 2026 'the year of Palestinian democracy'[50] and introduced an electoral calendar that included municipal elections in April, Fatah elections in May, elections for

48 Mapping Palestinian Politics (undated), 'Legislative Elections (2006)', European Council on Foreign Relations, https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/legislative-elections-2006.
49 Interviews with young Palestinian civil society leaders (2025–26), Gaza and the West Bank, December, February and March, under the condition of anonymity.
50 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas says 2026 will be the year of Palestinian democracy'.

the PLO's National Council[51] at the beginning of November,[52] and elections for the PLC at the end of November,[53] which were later postponed.[54]

In September 2025, President Abbas committed to hold parliamentary and presidential elections within one year from the end of Israel's war on Gaza.[55] In the words of a former senior Palestinian minister, these pledges 'reflect a political momentum towards democracy and an accelerated transition towards statehood'.[56]

With the last national elections taking place in 2006, no Palestinian under the age of 38 has ever voted in nationwide elections in the West Bank or Gaza.

Consequently, the PA updated electoral legislation,[57] published a draft interim constitution and worked with the Palestinian Central Elections Commission to implement the stages of the electoral processes.[58]

While the PLC elections were postponed, other electoral processes took place, beginning with municipal elections held on 25 April 2026.[59]

Municipal elections

With a limited field of candidates, voter turnout in the occupied West Bank was 56 per cent in 2026, only slightly below the level recorded (58.19 per cent) in the 2021–22 local elections.[60] In contrast, participation in Deir al Balah, the only city

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51 Magid, J. (2026), 'Palestinian Authority's Abbas calls first-ever direct PLO Parliament elections', The Times of Israel, 3 February 2026, https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinian-authoritys-abbas-calls-first-ever-direct-plo-parliament-elections.
52 PNC elections did not take place on 1 November. While the elections date has not been officially cancelled or changed, the PLO initiated a process in October 2026 to select PNC diaspora representatives in a number of constituencies, including Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, through limited electoral colleges and appointments. See the section on legislative elections later in this chapter.
53 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Mahmoud Abbas issues decree setting November 28 as date for the legislative elections', 9 July 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/172518.
54 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas sets September 11, 2027, as date for simultaneous presidential and legislative elections', 10 October 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/175699.
55 Abushamala, R. (2025), 'Palestinian president affirms commitment to holding elections within year after end of Israel's war in Gaza', Anadolu Agency, 23 September 2025, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/palestinian-president-affirms-commitment-to-holding-elections-within-year-after-end-of-israels-war-in-gaza/3695393.
56 Interview with a former senior Palestinian minister, under the condition of anonymity, London, February 2026.
57 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas issues decree-law amending the general elections law', 14 June 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/171648.
58 ConstitutionNet (2026), 'Draft of the Temporary Constitution of the State of Palestine', February, https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/2026-02/2026.02%20-%20Draft%20constitution%20%28English%29.pdf; Central Elections Commission – Palestine (2026), '2026 Local Elections', https://www.elections.ps/tabid/1301/language/en-US/Default.aspx.
59 Al-Mughrabi, N. and Sawafta, A. (2026), 'Palestinian local elections give some Gazans first chance to vote in years', Reuters, 25 April 2026, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/palestinian-local-elections-give-some-gazans-chance-vote-first-time-years-2026-04-25.
60 The Carter Center (2026), *Assessment of April 2026 Municipal Elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Final Report*, 20 June 2026, p. 26, https://cartercentee50c07c05.blob.core.windows.net/blobcartercentee50c07c05/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2026-Assessment-of-April-Municipal-Elections-in-the-OPT-en.pdf.

in Gaza where elections were held, was considerably lower, at just 22.8 per cent,[61] a figure that the Central Elections Commission attributed to the use of an outdated civil registry and the displacement of residents from the city.[62] Other factors contributing to the low turnout included the fragile security environment, loss of identification documents during the war and absence of several political parties from the process.[63]

According to media and election observation reports, Hamas and leftist PLO factions linked to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Palestinian People's Party (PPP), and the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF) did not participate,[64] as acceptance of the PLO programme was a condition for inclusion.[65]

Palestinian analysts interviewed for this research paper noted that Hamas avoided public endorsement of candidates,[66] while non-participating PLO factions allowed members to run as independents or within local coalition lists, reflecting a shared concern that candidates openly linked to Hamas would face restrictions or possible arrest by Israel and the PA.

For similar reasons, the Central Elections Commission agreed that Hamas security forces would not be involved in securing the polling stations following recent Israeli targeting. Instead, Hamas-run Palestinian civil police were deployed at a distance from the polling stations and private security providers were deployed in Deir al Balah to manage the queues.[67]

The municipal elections resulted in a clear victory for Fatah, whose candidates secured the majority of seats in the West Bank and Gaza.[68] Fatah claimed a 'landslide' and presented the result as a decisive victory.[69]

However, Palestinian researchers we spoke to noted that Fatah only faced non-Fatah competition in less than half of the constituencies, including Ramallah and Nablus.[70] In the remaining areas, there was no contest and Fatah or Fatah-affiliated lists won by default.[71]

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61 Ibid., p. 28.
62 Al Ghad TV (2026), 'Palestine: The Elections Committee Announces The Final Results for the Local Vote', 26 April 2026, https://www.alghad.tv/index.php/muncipalelectionsresults.
63 The Carter Center (2026), *Assessment of April 2026 Municipal Elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Final Report*, p. 28–29.
64 Muaddi, Q. (2026), 'Palestinians are holding local elections, but hardly anyone is running. Here's why that matters', Mondoweiss, 21 April 2026, https://mondoweiss.net/2026/04/palestinians-are-holding-local-elections-but-hardly-anyone-is-running-heres-why-that-matters.
65 Mapping Palestinian Politics (undated), 'Local Elections (2026)', European Council on Foreign Relations, https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/local-elections-2026; The Carter Center (2026), *Assessment of April 2026 Municipal Elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Final Report*, p. 5.
66 Interview with a Palestinian researcher, under the condition of anonymity, Ramallah (via Zoom), April 2026.
67 Al-Sharq al-Awsat (2026), 'Gaza prepares for first local elections in two decades', 22 April 2026, https://english.aawsat.com/arab-world/5265465-gaza-prepares-first-local-elections-two-decades; interview with an international elections expert, under the condition of anonymity, Jerusalem, June 2026.
68 Al-Mughrabi, N. and Sawafta, A. (2026), 'Palestinian leader's loyalists win local elections, including some seats in Gaza', Reuters, 26 April 2026, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/palestinian-leaders-loyalists-win-local-elections-including-some-gaza-2026-04-26.
69 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'Fatah says it secured sweeping victory in local elections, calls results public endorsement of its program', 26 April 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/169821.
70 Interview with a Palestinian researcher, under the condition of anonymity, Ramallah (via Zoom), April 2026.
71 International Crisis Group via ecoi.net (2026), 'Palestinian Authority Claims Success in Local Elections amid Spiralling Crises', 28 April 2026, https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2140862.html.

The outcome pointed to Fatah's continued dominance at the local level, while also drawing attention to persistent divisions and limited public engagement with the Palestinian political system. The result offers only a partial view of the broader political picture. In the absence of a direct contest between Fatah and Hamas, the elections provide limited insight into the national balance or Hamas's actual electoral weight. Nevertheless, these elections demonstrate the profound impact of the political, humanitarian and economic conditions in the OPT on democratic participation and future electoral processes.

Fatah elections

The Eighth Fatah General Conference was held on 14 May 2026, with 2,595 members voting in the West Bank, Gaza, Cairo and Beirut.[72] Turnout reached 95 per cent, and Mahmoud Abbas was re-elected as head of the movement.

Sixty candidates competed for 18 seats on the FCC, the movement's highest leadership body. The results led to the replacement of half of the old guard. This was evident in the outcome for Gaza representatives, where all but one lost their seats. Ahmad Helles, a close ally of President Abbas, was the only member from Gaza to retain a position.[73]

Marwan Barghouti, who remains imprisoned in Israel, topped the poll with 1,893 votes.[74] The results also brought new figures into the leadership, including Zakaria Zubeidi, Taysir Bardini and Yasser Abbas, the son of Mahmoud Abbas.

The exclusion of two prominent figures – Mohammad Dahlan, who had been expelled from Fatah following a long-running dispute with President Abbas, and former Palestinian foreign minister Nasser al-Qudwa, who had broken ranks with the leadership – narrowed the field and limited the scope for internal contestation. Al-Qidwa, publicly boycotted the elections,[75] criticized the process and accused the PA leadership of usurping power and sabotaging Fatah. Similar criticism was voiced by other prominent figures, including former government minister Qadura Fares, who argued that the process was marked by deliberate and systematic manipulation designed to determine outcomes.[76]

Many Palestinians,[77] including Fatah members, expressed concern to the authors that the lack of inclusivity and transparency in recent elections will deepen internal divisions and distance the movement from other PLO factions. Frustration has

72 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'Official preliminary results for Fatah Central Committee and Revolutionary Council elections announced', 18 May 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/170611.
73 Odeh, N. (2026), 'Some change but much more of the same in Palestinian Fatah Elections', Al Jazeera, 18 May 2026, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2026/5/18/some-change-but-much-more-of-the-same-in-palestinian-fatah-elections.
74 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'Official preliminary results for Fatah Central Committee and Revolutionary Council elections announced'.
75 Odeh, N. (2026), 'Some change but much more of the same in Palestinian Fatah Elections'.
76 Network of Palestinian Press (2026), 'Qadura Fares reveals violations in Fatah Conference Elections: Sorting took place sway from oversight', 30 May 2026, https://palps.net/?p=18545.
77 Interviews with Fatah members and Palestinian researchers, under the condition of anonymity, West Bank (via Zoom), 2025–26.

grown within Fatah, especially among members linked to sidelined or dissident factions, following President Abbas's failure to follow through on a pledge made at the Cairo Summit in March 2025 to pardon Fatah separatists.[78]

The election of Yasser Abbas to the FCC drew criticism from within Fatah and from wider Palestinian circles,[79] where it was viewed as further evidence of power consolidation within a narrow leadership circle.

Nevertheless, internal elections within Fatah carry wider political significance. According to a Fatah figure interviewed for this paper,[80] these elections impact the question of succession to President Abbas and further the divisions between competing currents inside Fatah. Access to senior leadership positions is therefore closely tied to outcomes within the movement's core institutions. As the interlocutor noted, 'the route to the presidency runs through Fatah's Central Committee'.[81]

Legislative elections

The PA Legislative Council (PLC)[82] elections that had been scheduled for 28 November 2026 were postponed by a presidential decree on 10 October and are now set for 11 September 2027, to be simultaneously held with presidential elections.[83] Meanwhile, elections for the legislative body of the PLO, the National Council (PNC), set through a presidential decree in February 2026, were scheduled for 1 November 2026,[84] though these did not take place.

PLC elections

President Abbas's presidential decree postponing the legislative elections followed a decision by the PLO's EC and consultations with Palestinian factions, including Hamas, which reportedly agreed to the decision.[85] The decree cited Israeli military operations and restrictions in the OPT,[86] the security and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories, Israel withholding PA revenues, and the failure

78 Abu Shamala, R. (2025), 'Palestinian president to create vice president position, grant amnesty for dismissed Fatah members', Anadolu Agency, 4 March 2025, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/palestinian-president-to-create-vice-president-position-grant-amnesty-for-dismissed-fatah-members/3499798.
79 Sawafta, A. (2026), 'Palestinian leader's son wins role in Abbas' party, official says', Reuters, 17 May 2026, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/palestinian-leaders-son-wins-role-abbas-party-official-says-2026-05-17.
80 Interview with a senior member of Fatah, under the condition of anonymity, Ramallah (via Zoom), April 2026.
81 Ibid.
82 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Mahmoud Abbas issues decree setting November 28 as date for the legislative elections'.
83 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas sets September 11, 2027, as date for simultaneous presidential and legislative elections'.
84 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas issues presidential decree calling for Palestinians to participate in elections of PNC', 2 February 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/166972.
85 Sawafta, A., Al-Mughrabi, N. and Abouhassira, E. (2026), 'Abbas postpones Palestinian elections, sets presidential poll for September 2027', Reuters, 12 October 2026, https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/abbas-postpones-palestinian-elections-sets-presidential-poll-september-2027-2026-10-10.
86 Israeli foreign minister Gideon Saar rejected President Abbas's remarks that Israel imposed obstacles to holding the Palestinian elections. See Times of Israel (2026), 'Sa'ar says Israel not responsible for Palestinian elections delay', 10 October 2026, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/saar-says-israel-not-responsible-for-palestinian-elections-delay.

to reconstruct Gaza and deploy international forces as per UNSC Resolution 2803, as reasons for the delay.[87] Moreover, the decree stated that the postponement will give an opportunity for a comprehensive factional Palestinian dialogue to take place.

The postponement of the PLC elections drew criticism from civil society organizations that consider the continued deferral of elections a risk for institutional accountability, as it undermines public confidence in Palestinian institutions.[88] Civil society organizations have said that they will lobby to bring the elections forward.[89]

A recent poll indicates that two-thirds of the public believe that, if PLC and presidential elections are held they 'will not be free and fair'.

In research interviews held before the postponement of the PLC elections, Palestinian electoral experts highlighted the importance of this process for sustaining unity between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, while listing several factors that would likely prevent these elections from taking place.[90] These included expected Israeli restrictions on the entry of electoral material to Gaza and other West Bank areas, as well as a ban on elections in East Jerusalem. However, interlocutors cited internal divisions within Fatah as well as Hamas's announcement that it will participate in the electoral process as major incentives for the postponement of the elections, with one interlocutor adding that, 'As long as Fatah fears defeat, it will continue to drag electoral competition'.[91] Furthermore, despite the broad public demand for elections, public expectations are not positive. A recent poll indicates that two-thirds of the public believe that, if PLC and presidential elections are held they 'will not be free and fair'.[92]

While challenges for holding elections under military occupation remain a major impediment, Palestinian leadership must address internal institutional and structural gaps that, if unaddressed, could hinder the conduct of any future elections even if Israel does not prevent elections from taking place. These include political divisions within Fatah and between the different factions, uncertain electoral legislation, and unclear institutional relationships between the various PLO and PA structures.

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87 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas sets September 11, 2027, as date for simultaneous presidential and legislative elections'.
88 Palestinian Return Centre (2026), 'PRC warns Palestinian Election Postponement Undermines Democratic Legitimacy and Leaves Diaspora Representation Unresolved', 15 October 2026, press release, https://prc.org.uk/en/post/5378/prc-warns-palestinian-election-postponement-undermines-democratic-legitimacy-and-leaves-diaspora-representation-unresolved.
89 Wattan News Agency (2026), 'The National Coalition for Election Monitoring: We are working to bring the elections forward, but our influence is limited due to a closed political system (Arabic)', 25 October 2026, https://www.wattan.net/ar/tv/499659.html.
90 Interview with a Palestinian electoral expert, under the condition of anonymity, Jerusalem (via Zoom), August 2026.
91 Nedim, H. and Sio, M. (2026), 'Hamas says it will take part in Palestinian elections under broadest possible coalition', Anadolu Ajansi, 12 August 2026, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/hamas-says-it-will-take-part-in-palestinian-elections-under-broadest-possible-coalition/4025785; interview with Palestinian civil society activist, under the condition of anonymity, October 2026.
92 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (2026), 'Press Release: Public Opinion Poll No (97)', 12 August 2026, https://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/1014.

An important factor that would need to be considered is the absence of clarity about the relationship between the NCAG (an unelected body) and any potentially elected legislative body. The former's mandate is due to expire in December 2027, and it remains unclear whether any PA or PLO institution would be allowed to function in Gaza in the meantime.

PNC elections

Postponement of PLC elections carries implications for the PNC's structure and ability to function. A presidential decree on 14 June 2026 expanded the number of PLC members from 132 to 200.[93] This followed an earlier electoral amendment issued by President Abbas on 4 June 2026 setting the total number of PNC seats at 350,[94] out of which 200 seats were going to be filled by the expanded number of PLC members who were scheduled to be elected in November 2026. The additional 150 seats were allocated to the diaspora. While the 4 June decision remains intact, a presidential decree from August revoked the 14 June decision and restored the number of PLC seats to 132. This was then followed by the decision in October to postpone the PLC elections. Palestinian interlocutors interviewed for this paper noted that these consecutive changes confused voters, cast uncertainly over the implementation and timing of the PNC electoral framework, undermined the local–diaspora representation aspect of the PNC, and blurred institutional links between the PA and the PLO, when the PLC and the PNC are distinct institutions with different mandates. [95]

Criticism was also levelled at the proposed formation of the PNC. The ratified PNC electoral framework stated that in case elections cannot be held in any of the diaspora constituencies, members will be selected through electoral colleges, consensus or appointment.[96] While the PNC elections that were due to take place on 1 November have not taken place, or been officially cancelled or changed, the PLO has already initiated a process of selecting PNC diaspora representatives in a number of constituencies, including Kuwait,[97] Bahrain and Qatar, through limited electoral colleges and appointments. These processes have been widely criticized by Palestinians in the OPT and the diaspora who claimed that their right to choose their representatives has been undermined.[98] A Palestinian political activist interviewed by the authors noted that President Abbas's son, Yasser Abbas, who was elected to the FCC in May, has presided over the PNC selection process in Kuwait adding that these appointments undermine trust in the entire process, which was supposed to be held through direct elections.[99] Palestinian electoral experts we spoke to stated that while the 4 June 2026 decision enables the PLO to resort to electoral

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93 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas issues decree-law amending the General Elections Law'.
94 A reduction from 747 seats. WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas ratifies Palestinian National Council's electoral system', 4 June 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/171196.
95 Interview with Palestinian electoral expert, October 2026; Palestinian Return Centre (2026), 'PRC warns Palestinian Election Postponement Undermines Democratic Legitimacy and Leaves Diaspora Representation Unresolved'.
96 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas ratifies Palestinian National Council's electoral system'.
97 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'Two Palestinian community representatives elected to new PNC in Kuwait', 6 September 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/174397.
98 Middle East Monitor (2026), 'Palestinian Forum in Istanbul calls for direct elections to National Council', 30 September 2026, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20260930-palestinian-forum-in-istanbul-calls-for-direct-elections-to-national-council.
99 Interview with a Palestinian political activist, under the condition of anonymity, Ramallah, 22 September 2026.

colleges, consensus or appointments to select the PNC diaspora representatives, due process was violated by starting the process without announcing the cancellation of the elections scheduled for 1 November.[100]

Institutional links

The June electoral amendment issued by President Abbas created a formal institutional link between the PLO and PA legislative bodies, with the stated purpose of regulating the relationship between them, 'on the basis of functional integration and institutional coordination, while preserving the independence and respective mandates of each body.'[101]

Closer alignment between the PNC – the legislature of a national liberation movement representing all Palestinians inside and outside the OPT – and the PLC – a parliament of a governing OPT entity – could better regulate and clarify the relationship between the PLO and the PA. However, if not carried out as part of an overall institutional reform strategy for Palestinian political structures, such a move could risk further blurring of the lines between the PLO and the PA and conflate the roles and responsibilities of each entity. In addition, it could raise concerns about the substitution of PA institutions by those of the PLO. This is particularly a concern in relation to succession and especially at a time when the PLC elections have been postponed until September 2027.

Particular attention should be paid to how the legislative hybrid structure could impact the issue of succession given the PNC and PLC roles in the process.

Particular attention should be paid to how the legislative hybrid structure could impact the issue of succession given the PNC and PLC roles in the process. At present, clarity is required on how the independence of each body will be preserved while credible institutional coordination can be maintained, and on the implications for the PLC composition and role following the postponement of the PLC elections.

Therefore, the relationship between the PNC, PLC and the NCAG, including how the PLC elections are placed within the reform process (for example, would the elected PLC be endorsed by the international community and regional states as part of a reformed PA), requires further clarification before elections can take place. This is particularly important for the acceptance of electoral results.

The new electoral timetable gives Palestinian leadership and factions almost one year to reach broad agreements on institutional reform and an electoral framework that, with the support of regional and international actors, can place them in a better position to face potential Israeli restrictions for holding elections.

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100 Interview with a Palestinian electoral expert, under the condition of anonymity, via Zoom, October 2026.
101 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas ratifies Palestinian National Council's electoral system'.

Leadership contest

Fatah's internal elections offer a useful guide to power and popularity in the movement, with implications for wider Palestinian elections. Marwan Barghouti, despite remaining in an Israeli prison, secured the highest number of votes in elections to the FCC, Fatah's executive decision-making body, while his wife Fadwa Barghouti came second in votes for the Revolutionary Council, Fatah's broader legislative body.[102] Barghouti was followed on the FCC election list by Majed Faraj, a newcomer to the FCC, with Jibril Rajoub coming third and Hussein al-Sheikh fourth.[103]

Barghouti's strong performance is consistent with recent opinion polls, which have identified him as the most popular candidate for the presidency and one of the few figures able to command a degree of consensus among Palestinians.[104] He is serving five life sentences, and had already signalled his intention to run for the presidency from prison ahead of the cancelled 2021 elections.[105] However, one interviewee questioned whether Barghouti's appeal has been overstated and expressed doubt about whether his physical and mental condition would allow him to assume an effective leadership role; before querying the practicalities of being president if Israel refuses to release him from prison. [106]

Majed Faraj, head of the Palestinian General Intelligence Service and a close confidant of President Abbas,[107] stands out as the only security chief to hold a political role within Fatah's senior leadership. According to an independent senior Palestinian official we spoke to, 'Faraj joining the Central Committee sends a clear message to all presidential hopefuls that the race for the presidency is not guaranteed to anyone.' [108]

At the same time, Hussein al-Sheikh's promotions to deputy PLO chairperson in April 2025 and deputy head of Fatah in June 2026 have been viewed by some analysts as an attempt by President Abbas to position a clear successor and pre-empt challenges from other senior Fatah figures, including Mohammad Dahlan.

For some within Fatah, al-Sheikh's promotion was seen as necessary to preserve stability and avoid potential future power struggles. Others, including members of Fatah as well as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Palestinian People's Party, were more critical.[109] They viewed it as a unilateral step, backed by external actors, aimed at consolidating President Abbas's political agenda and blocking the emergence

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102 Maan News Agency (2026), 'By names – Final results of the Fatah Movement elections' [Arabic], 17 May 2026, https://www.maannews.net/news/2161800.html.
103 Ibid.
104 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (2026), 'Press Release: Public Opinion Poll No (97)'.
105 Middle East Monitor (2019), 'Imprisoned Barghouthi to run in Palestine presidential election', 27 December 2019, https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191227-imprisoned-barghouthi-to-run-in-palestine-presidential-election.
106 Interview with a Palestinian academic, under the condition of anonymity, Doha, December 2026.
107 Yohanan, N. (2026), 'Preliminary results in Fatah leadership elections: Abbas's son, intelligence chief elected', The Times of Israel, 17 May 2026, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/preliminary-results-in-fatah-leadership-elections-abbass-son-intelligence-chief-elected.
108 Interview with an independent senior Palestinian official, under the condition of anonymity, Ramallah (via Zoom), June 2026.
109 The New Arab (2025), 'Mahmoud Abbas's appointment of Hussein al-Sheikh as deputy sparks Palestinian divisions'.

of a potential rival to Fatah. Several interviewees argued that al-Sheikh's promotion has brought no tangible benefits for the PA,[110] adding that his presumed close ties with Saudi Arabia have neither translated into financial support nor strengthened the PA's role in post-war Gaza planning. There is speculation among Palestinians interviewed for this paper that once the presidency seat becomes vacant, al-Sheikh's authority is likely to be challenged immediately.

There is speculation among Palestinians interviewed for this paper that once the presidency seat becomes vacant, al-Sheikh's authority is likely to be challenged immediately.

Mohammad Dahlan, a former Fatah security chief in Gaza who was expelled from the movement by President Abbas in June 2011,[111] remains a contender. Despite public statements that he will not run for the presidency,[112] he is widely seen as continuing to pursue the position and to invest in networks across Gaza, the West Bank and Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

In fact, his close ties to the UAE have enabled him to provide financial support to humanitarian efforts in Gaza over the past two years. He is also thought to to maintain contacts with both Hamas and Israeli security authorities.[113] His close associations with members of the NCAG and with the Trump administration have further raised his profile as a potential successor to President Abbas. However, sources familiar with the UAE's senior leadership told the authors that support for Dahlan is not unwavering, though he remains influential within the UAE's decision-making circles on Palestinian affairs.[114]

Palestinians interviewed for this paper noted that Dahlan's domestic and regional networks could place him in a favourable position to advance Palestinian interests with the US administration. Others suggested that his personal rivalry with President Abbas, seen as one of the main drivers of his political ambitions, alongside a controversial history during his service as the head of Palestinian preventive security in Gaza,[115] make Dahlan a divisive figure.

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110 Interviews with various Palestinian researchers, under the condition of anonymity, Ramallah and London, 2025–2026.
111 Greyman-Kennard, D. (2026), 'Who is Mohammad Dahlan, exiled security chief the Shin Bet chief allegedly met with? – explainer', The Jerusalem Post, 26 May 2026, https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/defense-news/article-897345.
112 Egypt Today (2024), 'Palestinian politician Mohamed Dahlan thanks President Sisi, says Israel was paralyzed on October 7', 4 January 2024, https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/129594/Palestinian-politician-Mohamed-Dahlan-thanks-President-Sisi-says-Israel-was; Makooi, B. (2023), 'Could exiled former Palestinian leader Mohammed Dahlan lead Gaza after the Israel-Hamas war?', France 24, 12 November 2023, https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20231112-could-exiled-former-palestinian-leader-mohammed-dahlan-lead-gaza-after-the-israel-hamas-war.
113 Makooi (2023), 'Could exiled former Palestinian leader Mohammed Dahlan lead Gaza after the Israel-Hamas war?'.
114 Interview with a regional official, under the condition of anonymity, London 2026.
115 Makooi (2023), 'Could exiled former Palestinian leader Mohammed Dahlan lead Gaza after the Israel-Hamas war?'.

While political ambitions are at play, regional and international actors must refrain from promoting individual Palestinian figures for leadership positions at the expense of Palestinian unity. Instead, external actors should be enablers of democratic processes that would allow the Palestinian people to choose their own leaders.

Political participation

Presidential and parliamentary elections remain a popular demand among Palestinians across the OPT.[116] However, even with two elections already completed in 2026, Palestinian interviewees from civil society, former officials, Fatah supporters and independents remain sceptical that these processes will revive democratic life, let alone build a path towards statehood.[117] The ambitious electoral calendar in its current form is widely seen as 'performative', with little expectation that the elections that have already taken place will restore legitimacy or alter prevailing patterns of institutional decline.

Several Palestinian interviewees argued that these measures help maintain existing institutions and consolidate Fatah's control over them. A January 2026 amendment to the local elections law, which required all candidates to submit a written commitment to the PLO's political and national programme, provided further support for this perspective. The provision drew criticism from Palestinian factions and civil society actors, who argue that it confers an undue advantage on the ruling party. This sentiment was reflected in a recent poll according to which two-thirds of the Palestinian public oppose requiring candidates to accept the PLO's commitments, including its agreements with Israel, as a condition for running in the elections.[118] Others, including non-supporters of President Abbas, by contrast, defend the requirement as an affirmation of the PLO's status as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, young Palestinians we spoke to note a lack of appetite for political engagement among their generation.[119] They attribute this to the contraction of political life under occupation, increased settler violence and the absence of a political horizon. Consequently, many Palestinians associate politics with ineffectiveness and corruption, and therefore increasingly see the leadership as inadequate.

A young Palestinian entrepreneur interviewed for this research paper added that, 'Young Palestinians fear that political engagement will result in either getting killed, imprisoned, or being corrupted' adding that concerns for personal safety are 'not limited to the [threat posed by] Israeli authorities'.[120] The death of Palestinian

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116 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (2026), 'Press Release: Public Opinion Poll No (97)'.
117 Interviews with various Palestinian interlocutors, under the condition of anonymity, West Bank, Gaza, London, and US, 2025–2026.
118 Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (2026), 'Press Release: Public Opinion Poll No (97)'.
119 Interviews with young Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, under the condition of anonymity, via Zoom, 2025–2026.
120 Interview with a young Palestinian entrepreneur from Gaza, under the condition of anonymity, London, March 2026.

political activist Nizar Banat[121] in custody in 2021 has since heightened fears among many younger Palestinians that they may face arrest or violence from the Palestinian security services. Banat had been a member of the Freedom and Dignity list,[122] a civil society organization formed to contest cancelled elections in 2021 and a well-known critic of the PA.

Young Palestinians have been largely excluded from discussions over post-war governance and political arrangements, despite representing a critical constituency for renewing and revitalizing Palestinian politics. According to the Palestinian Central Elections Commission, out of the 2.97 million eligible voters, more than 48 per cent are between 18–35 years old.[123] Their marginalization has further weakened confidence in both official domestic leadership and external actors.[124]

These dynamics have constrained the emergence of a new generation of Palestinian leaders. Younger figures are either excluded from formal political structures or discouraged from engaging with them, leaving few credible candidates. The lack of opportunities for political renewal weakens Palestinian democracy and limits its ability to respond to public expectations, further restricting the potential of new political leaders to emerge. Palestinian authorities must provide a safe and conducive environment for political activities to take place free of intimidation and restrictions of personal and universally protected freedoms.

Despite widespread scepticism, the announcement of elections and the initial preparations have stimulated debate within Palestinian society about the condition of Palestinian politics. The electoral calendar and related legislation prompted renewed discussion on political representation, legislative reform, the dominance of Fatah within the political system and competing visions for the character and governance of a future Palestinian state, even if the scope for meaningful change remains constrained.

Elections are a democratic obligation central to restoring Palestinian institutional legitimacy, breaking political stagnation, preserving the unity between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and consolidating a credible pathway to statehood. With national elections postponed to September 2027, the legal, technical and consultative groundwork must begin as soon as possible, undertaken in a transparent and inclusive manner, with a clear international commitment to accept the results. Such an effort would require robust coordination between national institutions, political factions, civil society and regional and international stakeholders.

Preparation for national elections across the occupied territory should be treated as a time-bound priority. The 2026 electoral calendar has also brought forward important questions concerning the political system, youth representation, transparency and inclusivity that require attention. Engaging the Palestinian

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121 McKernan, B. (2021), 'Nizar Banat's death highlights brutality of Palestinian Authority', *Guardian*, 31 August 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/31/nizar-banats-death-highlights-brutality-of-palestinian-authority.
122 Mapping Palestinian Politics (undated), 'Freedom and Dignity', European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/freedom-and-dignity.
123 Palestinian Central Elections Commission (2026), 'Information and Figures [Arabic]', https://www.elections.ps/tabid/1318/language/ar-PS/Default.aspx.
124 Abdel-Wahab, A. (2026), *Palestinian Youth and the Future of Governance: From Marginalization to Political Agency*, Pal-Think for Strategic Studies, https://palthink.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/DOC-20260319-WA0001.pdf.

population, including women and young people, in a broad discussion on these issues, alongside the introduction of clear, accessible, safe and transparent mechanisms for participation, would strengthen trust in and the credibility of the electoral processes.

The viability of conducting elections in Jerusalem remains a major issue. Therefore, preparatory discussions must include the feasibility and scope of elections in East Jerusalem and their centrality to the entire election process. Limited and/or phased voting for East Jerusalem could be considered. International actors have a significant role in securing access for domestic and international observers as well as in the planning for elections in East Jerusalem. Securing a clear international commitment to accept the results should be part of this groundwork.

Establishing credible, inclusive and transparent pathways for the transfer of power must be at the top of the Palestinian reform agenda and undertaken in wide consultation with the Palestinian public.

Establishing credible, inclusive and transparent pathways for the transfer of power must be at the top of the Palestinian reform agenda and undertaken in wide consultation with the Palestinian public. Enabling Palestinian youth to access political structures, local governance bodies and professional associations without fear of prosecution would help create a safer environment in which to exercise political freedoms.

These measures should form part of broader reform priorities and be supported by appropriate and non-discriminatory legislation, including the introduction of a youth quota in electoral law.

Electoral sequencing must be part of the wider consultations guided by the national interest, and the logistical and technical feasibility of ensuring credible processes. Setting an electoral timeline must not be a substitute for ensuring that clear and consistent succession measures are in place. International pressure on Israel is needed to enable the electoral process to take place throughout all stages.

The decision to incorporate the PLC members in the PNC must be approached and implemented with the above principles in mind.

The constitution-making process

On 11 November 2025, French President Emmanuel Macron received President Abbas at the Élysée Palace in Paris, where the two leaders discussed the full implementation of the US-brokered Gaza ceasefire agreement. Following the talks, they announced the launch of a joint committee to work on a Palestinian

provisional constitution that would consolidate the State of Palestine.[125] Since then, the committee has produced a first draft of 'the interim constitution of the State of Palestine', which was put forward for public review between 9 February and 10 April 2026.[126] Many Palestinians argue that constitution-making under occupation is a futile effort, suspecting that the initiative is being driven by international and regional actors to bolster the current political leadership.[127]

However, in a research interview for this paper, a former Palestinian official close to the PLO pushed back on this, asserting that the process is both important and timely, as it places discussions on reform within a Palestinian national framework.[128] In their view, the constitution-making process reaffirms and protects the Palestinian aspiration for an independent state, capitalizes on support from France and Saudi Arabia, and builds on growing international recognition of the Palestinian state.

Nevertheless, we interviewed Palestinian and international stakeholders engaged in the process, who recognized its limits, with some expressing doubt that it will be completed or result in a Palestinian provisional constitution in the near term.[129] Indeed, a number of stakeholders even described the effort as being driven primarily by international pressure, viewing it as performative rather than grounded in domestic political realities, but with many acknowledging the important discussions that were initiated by the process.[130]

Drawing on interviews conducted for this paper and feedback from the public review, views can be grouped into three broad observations. The first is that the scope and substance of the draft extend well beyond a temporary framework. Its provisions set out long-term constitutional arrangements that preserve existing institutional conventions and governing practices. In doing so, the draft limits the prospects for political renewal.

Second, the draft grants extensive centralized authority to the president, notably through provisions that allow for the dissolution of the PLC without a court ruling (Article 84) and enable presidential control over the appointment of constitutional court judges and senior civil servants (Article 87).[131] The lack of effective mechanisms to hold presidential decisions to account remains a central concern.

A third concern is the stipulation that Sharia principles constitute the primary source of legislation (Article 4), which has generated unease among members of the Christian and Samaritan communities. Some Palestinian interviewees

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125 *Le Monde* (2025), 'Macron and Abbas announce joint committee to work on Palestinian constitution', 11 November 2025, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2025/11/11/macron-and-abbas-announce-joint-committee-to-work-on-palestinian-constitution_6747345_7.html.
126 WAFA Palestinian News & Info Agency (2026), 'President Abbas issues decree ordering publication of first draft of interim constitution', 9 February 2026, https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/167231.
127 Mafarjeh, A. (2026), 'The Palestinian Authority's new constitution: A roadmap to statehood?', The New Arab, 17 February 2026, https://www.newarab.com/analysis/pas-new-constitution-roadmap-palestinian-statehood.
128 Interview with a former Palestinian diplomat, under the condition of anonymity, London, April 2026.
129 Interviews with Palestinian and international interlocutors engaged with the constitution-making process, under the condition of anonymity, West Bank and London 2026.
130 Interviews with a former senior Palestinian official, Palestinian legal expert and Palestinian researchers, under the condition of anonymity, West Bank, Europe, and US (via Zoom and in-person), March–May 2026.
131 ConstitutionNet (2026), 'Draft of the Temporary Constitution of the State of Palestine'.

also noted that the draft addresses only Muslim and Christian constituencies, missing an opportunity to articulate civil rights and protections for citizens of Jewish faith who may wish to live in a future Palestinian state.[132]

Additional observations raised by Palestinian interviewees involved in the constitutional discussions centre on unresolved questions surrounding the definition of Palestinian citizenship, the absence of any reference to state borders, and the future role and status of the PLO.

These gaps point to the limits of the first draft and suggest the need for a broader national charter. Such a document could articulate the shared aspirations that unite Palestinians worldwide, across political divisions and places of residence.

Whether the interim draft constitution will be adopted at the conclusion of the current process remains uncertain. A national referendum appears unlikely in the near term, given political and logistical impediments imposed mainly by the Israeli occupation followed by internal Palestinian political divisions. Two more plausible scenarios remain. The draft could either be adopted by presidential decree or set aside until it becomes politically feasible to move forward with it. Any decision taken in that regard is likely to depend on a combination of international pressure, internal Fatah dynamics, succession considerations and broader regional developments.

Regardless of the outcome, the debates, analysis and feedback generated through the constitution-drafting process carry lasting value. These discussions bring into focus the Palestinian political system, highlight dissatisfaction with existing political arrangements and point to the scale of the challenges facing Palestinian people.

The constitutional debate highlights a disconnect between Palestinian priorities and the framework through which reform is being advanced. Questions raised by Palestinian interviewees on legitimacy, accountability and national purpose now intersect with international efforts to condition support, funding and governance arrangements on specific outcomes. It is in this context that the expectations of regional and international actors towards the Palestinian leadership must be understood, not as abstract reform agendas, but as factors that define the limits and direction of the current transition.

The constitution-drafting process is a foundational state-building measure that must not be rushed or manipulated for political gains. Public consultation is a central component of democratic constitution-making and must be broad, inclusive, transparent and accessible to all segments of society. Even if the current process does not produce a constitutional document, public consultations around the draft's provisions remain valuable and should be built upon to reform political institutions.

President Abbas has stated that the review process is intended to include Palestinians inside and outside the State of Palestine. To give effect to this, the drafting committee must establish a robust communications and outreach plan, supported

132 Interview with Palestinian civil society activists, under the condition of anonymity, Jerusalem (via Zoom), March 2026.

by clear, accessible and transparent feedback mechanisms. Palestinian civil society and international organizations can play an important role in facilitating these consultations and broadening participation.

Given the political and security constraints across the OPT, including Gaza, online consultation should be used where necessary, and timelines adjusted to ensure wider participation.

The following chapter sets out the reforms that key international actors expect the Palestinian leadership to undertake and the tools they intend to use to press for their implementation, including the global diaspora.

04
External actors

Regional and international actors remain important stakeholders in Palestinian reform and governance. Their contribution will matter most if it supports institutional development, safeguards national unity and advances a credible pathway to statehood.

The prospects for Palestinian leadership reform are closely linked to the actions of regional and international actors that continue to influence the political, financial and institutional context. Arab states, the US, the EU and the UK broadly agree on the need for a reformed PA capable of governing both Gaza and the West Bank, but differ over political inclusion, reform priorities and the conditions attached to support. These differences matter because external engagement can strengthen Palestinian ownership and institutional coherence or reinforce competing expectations that constrain both. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar and the UAE have publicly stated their view that the PA remains the only acceptable institutional vehicle for Palestinian governance and statehood. In 2025, a UAE official told Reuters, 'The UAE will not participate in any plan that fails to include significant reform of the Palestinian Authority, its empowerment, and the establishment of a credible roadmap toward a Palestinian state … These elements – which are currently lacking – are essential for the success of any post-Gaza plan.'[133]

All five regional countries see leadership renewal, improved governance and greater administrative credibility as necessary conditions for any post-war political arrangement.

Their reform priorities converge on financial transparency, streamlined decision-making and a single chain of authority capable of governing both the West Bank and Gaza. Future political and financial engagement is therefore tied

133 Cornwell, A. (2025), 'UAE discusses post-war Gaza government with US and Israel', Reuters, 7 January 2025, https://www.reuters.com/world/uae-in-talks-with-us-israel-about-provisional-government-post-war-gaza-2025-01-07.

to the PA's ability to exercise authority and demonstrate effective governance, with reconstruction, donor confidence and international support conditioned on visible change rather than rhetorical commitment.[134]

The Arab League Bahrain Declaration (May 2024) states that, 'Security remains a solely Palestinian responsibility, managed by legitimate institutions of Palestine under the rule of law, with full international support.'[135]

The clearest point of divergence on how these outcomes should be achieved relates to Hamas and the future structure of power within a reformed system. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the UAE prioritize the exclusion of armed factions and the restoration of a clear monopoly of force, while allowing for varying degrees of Hamas's future political role once it has disarmed. Qatar adopts a different approach, advocating political inclusion as a route to stability and arguing that Hamas should be incorporated into a unified political framework rather than being sidelined.

The future of Hamas hinges largely on progress in implementing UNSCR 2803, disarmament and the transfer of governance authority to the NCAG. Any attempt to provide Hamas with a political role would require it to renounce armed struggle, accept a two-state framework and contest Palestinian elections as a political party.

Meanwhile, no formal efforts to advance reconciliation among Palestinian factions have taken place since the Beijing Declaration of July 2024,[136] which remains unimplemented.

UK, EU and US expectations

The UK, EU and US share a broad consensus that reviving Palestinian leadership requires demonstrable reform rather than declaratory commitments. All three actors place emphasis on improved governance capacity, financial transparency and institutional credibility as conditions for sustained engagement. Their approaches stress the need for a single governing authority capable of administering both Gaza and the West Bank, with security reform viewed as indispensable to political recovery.

Reform of education, oversight of public spending and the restructuring of prisoner and detainee payment schemes are also shared priorities, based on a common view that legitimacy, donor confidence and stability are closely connected. In different ways, all three frame reform as a prerequisite for restoring international support and maintaining the prospect of Palestinian statehood.

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134 Shikaki and Ladadweh (2025), *Reforming the Palestinian Authority*.
135 Daily News Egypt (2025), 'Final Communiqué: Emergency Arab Summit for Palestine', 4 March 2025, https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2025/03/04/final-communique-emergency-arab-summit-for-palestine.
136 The State Council of the People's Republic of China (2024), 'Palestinian factions sign Beijing Declaration on ending division, strengthening Palestinian national unity', https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202407/24/content_WS66a0a508c6d0868f4e8e96b1.html.

Palestinians interviewed for this research paper, including a former senior official, drew a clear distinction between the reform agenda promoted by international actors and the primary Palestinian issues.[137] Many argued that externally driven reform efforts remain heavily focused on Israel's security concerns, welfare provision and educational content, while giving insufficient attention to broader Palestinian priorities.[138]

Interviewees stressed the need for democratic reforms that promote inclusive political participation and enable Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination.

Options for international actors

International actors face an urgent and overarching responsibility that cuts across all recommendations in this paper: bringing to a halt the accelerating annexation of Palestinian land. A coordinated effort is required to address what amounts to an existential threat to the viability of a two-state solution. This requires sustained diplomatic pressure on Israel, coordinated positions on settlements and territorial integrity, and a clear signal that annexation carries meaningful political and economic consequences. Without action, the reform, reconstruction and governance measures outlined below will be overtaken by developments on the ground that render Palestinian statehood structurally unviable regardless of institutional progress. Within that context, the recently announced UK sanctions on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, supported by France and Canada, are a significant development.[139]

Reform framework and conditionality

The international community bears collective responsibility for ensuring that the reform process is credibly designed, equitably governed and genuinely linked to Palestinian statehood, and that it does not become a mechanism for indefinite delay or external control. The design of the reform agenda matters as much as its content. International actors should ensure that there is one clear, consolidated set of reforms, rather than a diffuse set of overlapping frameworks.

The Trump plan's reference to a 'reform programme as outlined in various proposals, including President Trump's peace plan in 2020 and the Saudi-French Proposal'[140] is broad and would need to be further clarified and narrowed down to concrete reform agenda items that are time-bound, aligned with the Palestinian national agenda and attached to clear achievable benchmarks. A multiplicity of competing reform frameworks risks creating confusion, enabling selective compliance and ultimately hindering progress.

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137 Interview with a former senior Palestinian official, under the condition of anonymity, London, May 2026.
138 Interview with an independent senior Palestinian official, under the condition of anonymity, Ramallah (via Zoom), June 2026.
139 Adams, P. and Moore, H. (2026), 'UK announces sanctions on West Bank settlements prompting furious Israeli response', BBC News, 8 September 2026, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4g7zen0vveo.
140 United Nations Security Council (2025), 'Resolution 2803 (2025)'.

Equally critical is the question of who governs the reform process. Israel should not have a monopoly over Palestinian reforms. Israel's ability to veto, delay or selectively endorse reform milestones creates a structural conflict of interest, given that prolonged Palestinian institutional weakness serves certain Israeli political objectives.

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Reform benchmarks must, therefore, be defined in advance, jointly agreed and independently verified through a UN-backed multilateral mechanism, rather than being subject to Israeli approval. Palestinian buy-in equally depends on the process being seen as credible and self-determined; reforms perceived as Israeli-designed conditions will lack the political legitimacy needed for them to take hold.

As set out in paragraph 10 of UNSCR 2803, the first report on progress was submitted on 15 May 2026.[141] While referencing the need for the PA to complete its reform programme, the report lacked any detail on that front. International actors must ensure that the reporting process on reform progress is included in the update reports, is robust, transparent and grounded in Palestinian realities.

The resolution clearly establishes the framework against which progress should be assessed, linking reform implementation and Gaza's redevelopment to the emergence of a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood. Reporting on PA reform must include clear benchmarks and timelines for completion. It should be prepared in consultation with the PA, the NCAG, the donor community supporting reform and the UN and other international organizations operating in Gaza. The report should be made public, and the UNSC should enable a process through which Palestinian civil society can provide observations.

Alongside periodic reporting, the UN should commission a transparent, inclusive and credible polling exercise to assess perceptions of progress among Palestinians in Gaza.

Beyond the mechanics of reporting, international actors must reinforce Palestinian reform efforts by protecting and investing in Palestinian civil society, recognizing that the viability of future elections and the legitimacy of the reform process itself depend as much on the health of civic space as on the technical frameworks within which they operate.

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141 Board of Peace, Office of the High Representative for Gaza (2026), 'Letter dated 15 May 2026 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council', S/2026/418, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/implementation-of-united-nations-security-council-resolution-2803-2025-report-of-the-board-of-peace-through-the-office-of-the-high-representative-for-gaza-s-2026-418.

Moreover, building on provision 6 of President Trump's 20-point plan[142] and the BoP high representative's statement that Hamas could remain as a political movement, international actors should support a time-bound link between Hamas's disarmament and its political transition.[143] If this option is explored, then regional and international guarantees that Hamas's electoral participation will not be contested would give Hamas a concrete incentive to decommission its weapons, while avoiding the need for a prolonged factional reconciliation process before elections can proceed.

What recognizing states can do

As of late 2025, 159 of the UN's 193 member states recognized the State of Palestine, representing more than 80 per cent of the international community.[144] Recognition has expanded steadily since Palestine's 1988 declaration of independence, with a further wave of recognitions by Western states, including the UK, France, Canada and Australia in 2025.

Recognition of Palestinian statehood, while politically significant, remains largely symbolic unless it is operationalized through concrete action and translated into coordinated practical measures.

One of the most immediate ways to operationalize recognition is through institutional integration. One approach would be to treat Palestine as a functioning state within international systems by upgrading diplomatic missions to full embassies, concluding bilateral agreements across areas such as trade, taxation and aviation, and integrating Palestine into regional economic frameworks. These steps do not resolve underlying sovereignty constraints, but they could incrementally construct the administrative and diplomatic infrastructure of statehood, normalizing Palestine's role as a state actor. Recognizing states can also move towards providing direct budgetary support, alongside humanitarian assistance, to strengthen institutional capability and ensure continuity. Areas for action include:

Economic measures

- Grant preferential market access for Palestinian goods and services.
- Recognize Palestinian standards and certifications.
- Facilitate banking relationships and financial connectivity.
- Encourage private sector investment and commercial partnerships.
- Simplify customs procedures and reduce barriers to Palestinian exports.

Legal and multilateral measures

- Support Palestinian participation in international organizations and treaty frameworks.

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142 BBC News (2025), 'Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan in full'.
143 Williamson, L. (2026), 'Hamas can survive politically by giving up weapons and armed conflict, peace envoy says', BBC News, 13 May 2026, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3r248e977eo.
144 Abu Samra, Q. and Chouiref, T. (2025), 'Timeline – Countries recognizing state of Palestine since 1988', Anadolu Agency, 23 September 2025, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/timeline-countries-recognizing-state-of-palestine-since-1988/3696119.

- Coordinate diplomatic positions in multilateral forums, including the UN General Assembly.
- Back Palestinian engagement with international legal mechanisms and courts.
- Strengthen recognition of Palestine's legal status within the international system.

While such measures do not resolve the political conflict or enforcement challenges, they can strengthen Palestinian institutions, support economic viability and embed Palestine more firmly within international diplomatic and legal frameworks.

A central priority is addressing the fragmentation between Gaza and the West Bank. Recognizing states can support efforts to strengthen institutional links, preserve administrative continuity and prevent long-term territorial separation. Without such measures, Palestinian statehood risks becoming fragmented both politically and institutionally.

These measures point to a broader conclusion. Recognition becomes meaningful when states move beyond declarations and support the development of the institutions and functions on which statehood depends. The challenge for recognizing states is not whether they support Palestinian statehood, but whether they are prepared to act collectively and practically to make it viable.

05
A transitional architecture for Gaza

The effectiveness of the BoP and the NCAG will depend on preserving the conditions necessary for Palestinian statehood, including institutional unity, fiscal viability and credible political participation.

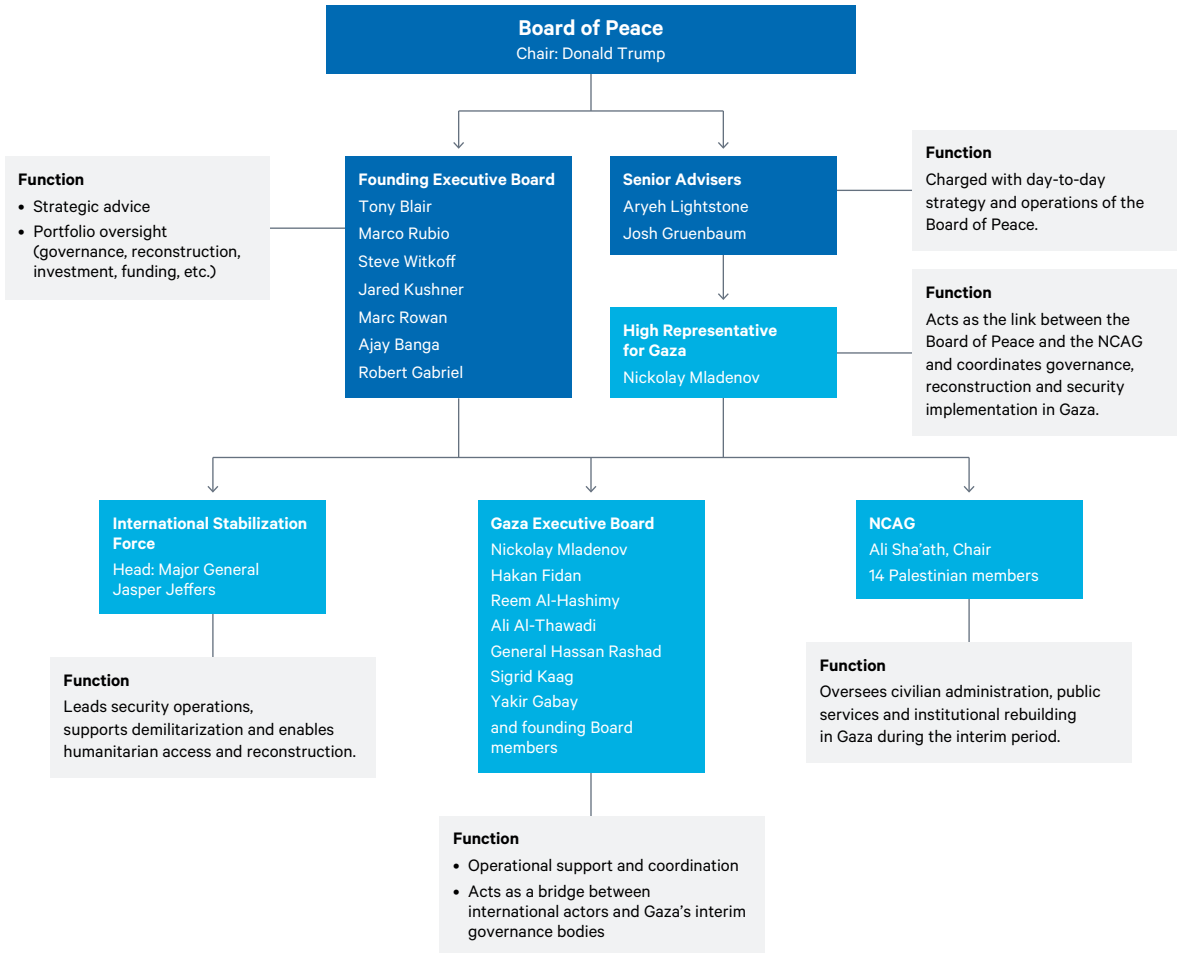
Gaza's transitional governance arrangements can only succeed if they work closely with Palestinian institutions and do not operate as a separate governing structure. As currently designed, the BoP and the NCAG fall well short of that standard.

The emerging governance architecture for Gaza is structured around three linked levels of authority covering political oversight, executive delivery and local administration, while embedding a parallel requirement for Palestinian institutional reform.

At the top sits the BoP, a high-level political and diplomatic body chaired by President Donald Trump and composed of key regional stakeholders, major donor states and international organizations.[145] It is tasked with setting strategic direction, mobilizing international political and financial support, and promoting effective implementation and institutional accountability throughout Gaza's post-conflict transition.[146]

145 United Nations Security Council (2025), 'Resolution 2803 (2025)'.
146 The White House (2026), 'Statement on President Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict', 16 January 2026, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2026/01/statement-on-president-trumps-comprehensive-plan-to-end-the-gaza-conflict.

Figure 1. Board of Peace structure



Source: White House (2026), 'Statement on President Trump's Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict'; UN Security Council (2025), 'Resolution 2803 (2025)'.

The BoP's Founding Executive Board is responsible for implementing its mission and authorizing financial controls and oversight mechanisms. Senior advisers Aryeh Lightstone and Josh Gruenbaum lead the BoP's day-to-day strategy and operations. For Gaza, High Representative Nickolay Mladenov links the BoP with the NCAG, supporting oversight of governance, reconstruction and development, and coordination across civilian and security pillars. A separate Gaza Executive Board, of which Mladenov is also a member, supports the high representative's office and the NCAG in governance and service delivery. [147]

At the ground level, the NCAG is intended to function as an interim local governing authority, comprising 15 Palestinian technocrats responsible for day-to-day governance, service delivery and institutional rebuilding.[148] While the membership has reportedly been agreed with the support of key Palestinian actors, including Hamas, its deployment and ability to operate inside Gaza remains constrained.

147 Sherman, S. (2026), 'Board of Peace explained: How it works and who is running it', JNS, 25 January 2026, https://www.jns.org/board-of-peace-explained-how-it-works-and-who-is-running-it.
148 Shaath, A. (2026), 'Statement from Dr. Ali Shaath: Statement from Chief Commissioner on the Adoption of the NCAG Mission Statement', National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, https://www.ncag.ps/en/news/statement-dr-ali-shaath.

The BoP's first implementation report to the UN Security Council names Ali Sha'ath as NCAG chair and states that the committee has assembled its legal, financial and administrative architecture and vetted candidates for a civilian police force, but that as of the end of November 2026 it had still not been able to enter areas of Gaza remaining under Hamas armed control, meaning no administrative handover had yet occurred.[149]

The NCAG is expected to serve as a transitional administration until December 2027 (although this may be extended), at which point a reformed PA would reassume full administrative responsibility for Gaza and the West Bank. The NCAG's mandate was initially focused on civilian administration and reconstruction, which left wider political and security questions unresolved. The Gaza Roadmap issued on 30 July 2026 handed the NCAG all civilian governance and security functions in Gaza including the administration and implementation of Hamas's decommissioning process.[150] The roadmap also stipulated that, '[the] NCAG shall operate in accordance with Palestinian laws, relevant international standards and the principles of good governance'.[151] Nevertheless, while Hamas is expected to remain an influential political actor, the future of its security structures remains one of the most sensitive issues facing any transitional arrangement.

The transitional phase and its institutional structure will test whether Palestinian governing institutions can deliver effective and accountable administration while operating under international oversight.

At its core is the question of whether the NCAG will be allowed sufficient autonomy to fulfil its mandate. The transition will also test the BoP's willingness to implement UNSCR 2803, including its readiness to support a Palestinian governing body in Gaza despite potential Israeli objections. More broadly, any progress will serve as a measure of the commitment of international actors to meaningful PA reform.

Within this context, UNSCR 2803 risks making Palestinian statehood conditional on political and administrative reform rather than treating a Palestinian state as an accepted political objective. This creates a tension with established legal principles. While international law does not guarantee a right to statehood, it does recognize the right to self-determination.[152] Conditioning political progress on reform benchmarks therefore creates a gap between the legal principle of self-determination and its political implementation, which may complicate expectations surrounding both recognition and the future trajectory of Palestinian governance.

UNSCR 2803 has attracted significant criticism for the risks it poses to the long-term viability of a Palestinian state. A key concern is that the resolution may institutionalize the separation of the Gaza Strip from the West Bank, treating Gaza as a disarmed and depoliticized redevelopment zone rather than as a core component of future Palestinian sovereignty. This concern forms part of a broader critique of the policy logic underpinning the resolution, in particular its reliance on an 'economics first' approach to stabilization and reconstruction.

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149 Board of Peace, Office of the High Representative for Gaza (2026), 'Letter dated 15 May 2026 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council'.
150 Board of Peace (2026), 'Gaza Roadmap', https://boardofpeace.org/gaza-roadmap.
151 Ibid., principle 6.
152 United Nations General Assembly (1960), 'Resolution 1514 (XV)', article 2, 14 December, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/ICJ%201514XV.pdf.

Economics first

An 'economics first' approach may offer short-term stability. However, in other contexts, it has failed to deliver durable political outcomes when separated from the broader struggle for national rights.[153] An economic revitalization strategy that treats Gaza as a self-contained unit risks weakening its political and economic connection to the wider Palestinian cause.

If economic stability, service delivery and reconstruction move forward in Gaza without parallel political progress towards national unity, statehood and self-determination, then Gaza risks becoming a separately governed territory rather than part of a future Palestinian state.

An economic revitalization strategy that treats Gaza as a self-contained unit risks weakening its political and economic connection to the wider Palestinian cause.

There is a danger that normalizing Gaza's separation from the West Bank will reduce incentives for political reconciliation and weaken international pressure for a comprehensive settlement addressing Palestinian representation, sovereignty and borders. Therefore, the drive for economic improvement may come to displace efforts by the international community to pursue a political resolution and advance Palestinian statehood.

One way in which this dynamic is likely to take shape is through the operational design of reconstruction itself. A phased economic approach, based on the division of Gaza into so called 'green' and 'red' zones,[154] where access to reconstruction and services is conditional on compliance with security and administrative benchmarks, risks producing not only uneven recovery but a divided territory. Areas that meet these criteria gain access to reconstruction, employment and services, while others remain excluded, reinforcing inequality and deepening internal divisions.

These risks are not hypothetical. Leaked planning documents informing the BoP's approach, including the Gaza Reconstruction and Economic Acceleration Transformation Trust plan (GREAT Trust)[155] and Project Sunrise, envisage Palestinians exchanging their property rights for either permanent housing elsewhere in Gaza, which could take years to materialize, or resettlement abroad. Under these planning documents, land titles would be recorded on blockchain in a territory where land administration offices, boundary markers and records have themselves been destroyed. Although blockchain creates a permanent and

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153 Examples include the Oslo-era emphasis on donor-led institution-building, Gaza after 2007, Bosnia's internationally supervised post-war governance, and Iraq's post-2003 technocratic reconstruction efforts, all of which illustrate the limitations of economic or administrative interventions in producing durable political outcomes when disconnected from broader questions of rights, legitimacy and political settlement.
154 United Nations Security Council (2025), 'Resolution 2803 (2025)'.
155 Washington Post (undated), 'The GREAT* Trust', https://www.washingtonpost.com/documents/f86dd56a-de7f-4943-af4a-84819111b727.pdf.

difficult-to-alter record, it cannot determine whether the information entered is accurate. In a context of contested ownership and incomplete records, mistakes could become difficult to reverse. Reconstruction decisions of this kind will shape not only where services are delivered but who retains a legal claim to remain.[156]

Under these conditions, there is a strong likelihood that such differentiation will become fixed over time, fragmenting Gaza into distinct zones of governance and opportunity. This would make it more difficult to reunify Gaza under a single Palestinian authority and, in turn, complicate efforts to integrate Gaza and the West Bank within a common framework of Palestinian governance. Division within Gaza would therefore pose a significant obstacle to Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

If this scenario materializes under the auspices of the BoP and a UN Security Council resolution, responsibility for sustaining that division would rest with the very organizations tasked with enabling Palestinian governance, which would end any credible pathway to a unified Palestinian state. In fact, Arab states represented on the BoP, the Founding Executive Board and the Gaza Executive Board would share responsibility for this outcome.

Palestinian agency under the proposed framework

The institutional framework built around the BoP and its interim committees limits the role of Palestinian actors, which is an issue that has drawn criticism. A former Palestinian minister interviewed by the authors remarked, 'while Palestinians have no agency in the BoP/Gaza Executive Board, Israel – represented by a prime minister who rejects the idea of a Palestinian state – sits on the board, and one of the Gaza Executive Board members is an Israeli national. Regardless of how much the NCAG is trained or empowered, statehood is not on the cards under the current Israeli government.'[157]

The administrative fragmentation described above is not incidental. Treating aid delivery, healthcare, civil records and reconstruction as separate technical functions, each without an accompanying national political framework, risks making the question of Palestinian political representation disappear by default rather than resolving it.[158]

The concern that the NCAG could emerge as a political competitor when elections eventually take place, while a legitimate consideration for Palestinian leaders, should not be allowed to undermine its role during the transitional period. NCAG has itself sought to pre-empt this concern, stating in May 2026 that it is

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156 Hassan, Z. (2026), 'The Board of Peace Plan for Gaza', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 30 July 2026, https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2026/07/gaza-refugees-displacement-board-of-peace-trump-netanyahu-palestine-israel.
157 Interview with a former Palestinian minister, under the condition of anonymity, London, January 2026; member states of the board include Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Vietnam, Argentina, El Salvador, Paraguay, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.
158 Brown, N. (2026), 'In the Trump Gaza Plan, Diplomatic Failure is Success', Diwan, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 20 July 2026, https://carnegieendowment.org/middle-east/diwan/2026/07/in-gaza-diplomatic-failure-is-success.

'a professional, non-partisan body that does not represent any political faction' and that members' prior political affiliations 'do not affect its mandate as a temporary professional body'.[159]

Although the NCAG's ability to operate effectively, including in Gaza, remains constrained by political and security realities, Palestinian leaders should prioritize measures that preserve political, administrative and institutional links between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Failure to do so risks deepening existing divisions and creating separate centres of governance, posing a serious challenge to the territorial and political coherence on which any future Palestinian state would depend. This renewed focus on political reform has not been confined to the electoral track. It has also extended to broader questions about the institutional foundations of Palestinian governance, including the legal and constitutional framework that would underpin a future state.

The two-year transitional mandate set out in UNSCR 2803 marks an important moment for Palestinian leadership and society. It provides an opportunity to address internal fragmentation and for the PA to implement reforms needed to regain control over the political process, though the outcome will depend not only on Palestinian action but also on external pressures and the constraints imposed by continued Israeli policy and occupation.

The outcome of this period will depend in large part on the relationship between a reforming PA in the West Bank and the NCAG in Gaza. Although the PA has no formal governing role in Gaza, its ability to manage both formal and informal engagement with the BoP and the NCAG will be critical to maintaining institutional links between Gaza and the West Bank. This will require regular political dialogue, coordination of public administration and service provision, and efforts to harmonize governance arrangements in preparation for eventual reintegration. A Joint Coordination Office between the PA and the BoP already provides one such channel, having convened at least three times by mid-2026,[160] though its practical impact on service delivery and reconstruction planning remains untested.

Without such measures, institutional and political separation is likely to become further entrenched, weakening territorial integrity and undermining any credible pathway to Palestinian statehood. If this transition period is not used to narrow the administrative and political divide between Gaza and the West Bank, permanent institutional separation will become an irreversible reality. International and regional stakeholders must prioritize the restoration of Palestinian political agency and ensure the reform agenda is tied to a viable, unified and sovereign state.

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159 National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (2026), 'Statement from NCAG', 5 May 2026, https://www.ncag.ps/en/news/ncag-statement-may5.
160 National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (2026), 'National Committee for the Administration of Gaza Presents Comprehensive Recovery Program to Donors at Brussels Conference', 16 July 2026, https://www.ncag.ps/en/news/brussels-donors-conference-2026-07-16.

PA and NCAG: Complement rather than compete

The creation of a separate, quasi-independent interim governance body, in the form of the NCAG in Gaza, risks being perceived as a threat to the authority of the PA and the PLO.[161] These concerns are only exacerbated by the PA leadership's domestic legitimacy problem and struggles to govern and provide essential services and basic security to the Palestinian population. In this context, a better funded body responsible for governance and service delivery, backed by international and regional support, and operating outside the PLO programme and PA oversight, weakens the leadership in Ramallah and may develop into a credible rival in the event of national elections.

However, establishing a separate, transitional and dedicated structure to deliver basic services in post-war Gaza does not in itself pose a threat, provided the end point of the transition is clear, and sovereign links are maintained through other means. Indeed, if the NCAG delivers effective governance, reconstruction and service provision, it could help demonstrate the value of accountable Palestinian administration and contribute to rebuilding public trust in national institutions. For this reason, the challenge is not the existence of a transitional body in Gaza but ensuring that it remains connected to a broader Palestinian political framework and a clear pathway towards reunified governance. The following section sets out possible frameworks to preserve the link between the West Bank and Gaza, a central requirement for a viable Palestinian state.

Preserving the West Bank–Gaza Strip link

Maintaining connective governance between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is essential if Palestinians are to preserve a viable pathway to statehood.

UNSCR 2803 mandates the BoP to coordinate reconstruction, governance and security reform in Gaza until a reformed PA is assessed as capable of resuming authority. As of October 2026, the BoP remains largely unfunded and constrained in its operations. The NCAG is not yet in Gaza and continues to operate from Egypt, with deployment tied to the disarmament of Hamas.

The first progress report and subsequent briefings by the UN deputy special coordinator for the Middle East peace process to the UN confirmed that implementation of UNSCR 2803 was significantly behind schedule. Hamas's disarmament, the deployment of the International Stabilization Force, Israeli troop withdrawal and the handover of administrative authority to the NCAG all remained incomplete, with Israeli forces reportedly controlling more than 60 per cent of Gaza up from 52 per cent at the ceasefire, while the UN's $4.06 billion humanitarian response plan for the OPT had received only $540 million.[162]

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161 Interviews with Palestinian researchers and academics, under the condition of anonymity, West Bank and London, 2025–2026.
162 Alakbarov, R. (2026), 'Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East', UN deputy special coordinator for the Middle East Peace process, 21 May 2026, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/security-council-briefing-21may26; Board of Peace, Office of the High Representative for Gaza (2026), 'Letter dated 15 May 2026 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council'.

However, on 30 July 2026, the BoP announced that Egypt, Qatar, Türkiye and the US had finalized a roadmap for Hamas's disarmament and the transfer of governance to the NCAG,[163] with a detailed implementation plan due within 14 days. Hamas agreed to the plan, while Israel rejected it.[164] The NCAG nevertheless welcomed the announcement the following day, affirming that it had 'completed extensive institutional and operational preparations to take over the administration of the Strip' and describing its mandate as resting on 'one authority, one law and one security apparatus'.[165]

A European diplomat familiar with the work of the NCAG told the authors that 'there are other challenges to Gaza's governance than Hamas's disarmament'.

A European diplomat familiar with the work of the NCAG told the authors that 'there are other challenges to Gaza's governance than Hamas's disarmament'.[166] They pointed to the absence of an agreed administrative and legal framework through which the NCAG could govern Gaza once deployed. While these concerns could be mitigated by provision 6 of the July roadmap's stipulation that the NCAG shall operate in accordance with Palestinian laws,[167] the NCAG's governance is yet to be tested. Questions remain over whether existing civil service structures would be retained, how authority would be exercised at the local level, and how administrative continuity would be maintained over time.

Even within these constraints, the PA retains the capacity to support governance frameworks in Gaza without formally re-establishing a presence or undermining the role of the NCAG. Continued institutional links make this possible. The NCAG is largely composed of technocrats who previously worked within PA ministries and agencies, while Gaza's civil and land registries remain integrated within central PA systems under the Ministry of Interior.

At the same time, a Gaza only economic model is unlikely to be viable. Even with support from the BoP, the territory cannot realistically function in isolation from wider Palestinian and regional economic networks. Although Hamas has governed Gaza since 2007, elements of the PA's administrative, legal and regulatory frameworks have persisted, especially in civil service arrangements and legal reference systems. These continuities provide a basis for maintaining administrative coherence until the PA can resume a fuller political and operational role.

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163 The White House (@WhiteHouse) via X (2026), 'Today, the Board of Peace reached a HISTORIC agreement for the COMPLETE DISARMAMENT of Hamas and all other armed groups in Gaza', 30 July 2026, https://x.com/WhiteHouse/status/2082971225949638708.
164 Lovatt, H. (2026), 'Hamas has agreed to disarm. Israel should now agree to peace', ECFR, 6 August 2026, https://ecfr.eu/article/hamas-has-agreed-to-disarm-israel-should-now-agree-to-peace.
165 National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (2026), 'NCAG Welcomes Announcement of Roadmap for the Future of Gaza', 31 July 2026, https://www.ncag.ps/en/news/ncag-welcomes-roadmap-announcement.
166 Interview with a European diplomat, under the condition of anonymity, London, May 2026.
167 Board of Peace (2026), 'Gaza Roadmap'.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the relationship between the NCAG and other Palestinian institutions, including the potentially resurrected PLC, must be clarified in order to avoid undermining the institutional linkage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Instead of operating in parallel to the PA, the NCAG should operate in coordination with it.

On this basis, external engagement is less about constructing entirely new governance arrangements than about sustaining and reinforcing existing institutional linkages between Gaza and the West Bank. Regional actors can influence developments by providing incentives, stabilizing fiscal flows and providing political backing, rather than simply exercising direct administrative control. Their role should be to support an interim order that remains, however imperfectly, grounded in existing Palestinian institutions and administrative systems.

International engagement with the BoP and NCAG

The US, the EU and the UK share a broadly aligned approach, while relying on different policy tools and institutional frameworks. All three support transitional governance arrangements as interim mechanisms and maintain that long-term authority should return to the PA.

Each party ties financial and political support to institutional reform, fiscal transparency and the consolidation of governance under a unified Palestinian framework. They support technocratic administration during reconstruction as an interim measure and use financial assistance and oversight mechanisms to guide the transition. All three also aim to prevent interim arrangements from developing into parallel governance structures, insisting that they remain linked to a longer-term political settlement.

International actors retain a range of tools to influence Palestinian institutional reform, though their effectiveness varies by scale, technique and intent. While no single actor can drive reform on its own, coordinated deployment of financial conditionality, technical assistance and political signalling can influence the speed and direction of institutional change within the Palestinian system.

06 Conclusion

Institutional unity, fiscal viability and credible political participation are critical to preserving the foundations of Palestinian statehood. Reform and transitional governance will strengthen Palestinian legitimacy and national cohesion.

The two-year transition period established by UNSCR 2803 places the PA at the centre of a demanding and tightly constrained process. The PA is expected to pursue leadership reform, restore administrative credibility and prepare to resume governance in Gaza, all while operating under occupation, sustained external scrutiny and in the context of a deepening fiscal and banking crisis. This research paper has shown that while political reform is widely recognized as necessary, including by Palestinians, it remains contested in substance, process and purpose. The gap between international expectations and domestic legitimacy continues to define how reform is interpreted, resisted or selectively implemented.

The assessment of Palestinian leadership reform in this paper highlights enduring structural weaknesses and limited domestic support. Succession arrangements remain contested, electoral processes uncertain and constitutional debates open to criticism for consolidating authority rather than revitalizing the political system.

Initiatives such as the public consultation on the draft interim Palestinian constitution, launched in February 2026, have created opportunities for debate on future governance. Such processes, however, do not by themselves establish broad public confidence or a shared national direction. Without credible avenues for political participation and leadership renewal, reform risks being viewed as procedural rather than substantive, and as externally driven rather than Palestinian-led.

Previous efforts clearly show that reforms do not work without domestic support. For reform to take hold, Palestinian leadership must draw on a credible domestic base. This should be a priority, as active participation by Palestinians enhances legitimacy and is more likely to produce sustainable outcomes. Legitimacy therefore remains central. To rebuild it, the PA must act in an inclusive and

transparent manner, invest in institution-building and open space for more active political participation. This in turn may enable a credible democratic transition and bring new leadership into a political system that has struggled to renew itself.[168]

The analysis of transitional governance arrangements for Gaza highlights a set of risks. The BoP and the NCAG are intended as temporary mechanisms, but their operation carries longer term implications if administrative separation between Gaza and the West Bank becomes normalized. While these bodies may provide short-term functionality, they lack a clear framework for political integration. Preserving institutional continuity between the two territories remains essential if the transition is to support rather than undermine a unified Palestinian political future.

Palestinian reforms were never intended as a standalone project. Donors have long understood that the success of these initiatives depended on progress along parallel diplomatic and political tracks.

Regional and international actors retain significant leverage through funding, security coordination and political recognition. However, that leverage is not applied consistently and is often pulled in different directions by competing priorities. Arab states broadly converge on the PA as the eventual centre of authority but differ in how best to use financial conditionality and approach political inclusion. European and US engagement reinforces reform benchmarks but often prioritizes stability and compliance in ways that risk narrowing Palestinian agency if applied inflexibly.

Progress will depend on regional and international actors working towards a clear and consistent objective. Funding, political engagement and security support should be coordinated to strengthen Palestinian institutions, rather than fragment them or create parallel structures. Financial support must be tied to agreed reforms and applied consistently, while pressure is maintained to prevent further territorial fragmentation. The role of the international community should be to support Palestinian leadership in regaining control over governance, not to displace it.

The consequences of failure extend beyond the shortcomings of a particular reform programme or transitional arrangement. If the PA cannot rebuild legitimacy, establish credible succession arrangements, remain fiscally viable and demonstrate its capacity to govern, the transition risks accelerating the political and territorial fragmentation it was intended to prevent. Gaza and the West Bank would continue along separate political trajectories, while ongoing settlement expansion and *de facto* annexation further reduce the territorial basis for a future Palestinian state. In that scenario, the transitional framework established by UNSCR 2803 would not preserve the conditions for Palestinian self-determination but contribute to their gradual disappearance.

Success should not be measured by whether a Palestinian state emerges during the transition period. It should be measured by whether the transition preserves the conditions necessary for statehood to remain achievable. Even modest progress would matter.

168 Interview with a former adviser to the PLO, under the condition of anonymity, December 2025, Doha.

First, the institutional link between Gaza and the West Bank must be preserved: the NCAG must operate visibly within the PA and PLO framework, civil registries and administrative systems must remain integrated, and no governance arrangement in Gaza should develop into a self-sustaining parallel authority.

Second, the PA must carry out sufficient reform to retain donor confidence and Arab political backing rather than comprehensive transformation, while demonstrating enough visible progress on financial transparency, security consolidation and inclusive political processes to sustain the legitimacy required for international engagement. Delivering these reforms is itself contingent on the PA's fiscal survival: an institution unable to pay salaries or maintain access to the banking system cannot sustain the very reforms being asked of it. The UAE's condition that reform be real rather than rhetorical, and Saudi Arabia's readiness to supervise the process, signal that the bar, while demanding, is not impossibly high.

Third, the electoral calendar must produce at least one credible test of Palestinian democratic life, PLO or PA legislative elections that are inclusive, or a constitutional process that generates genuine national debate rather than consolidating existing power. Even these limited outcomes, if achieved together, would preserve the institutional coherence, territorial integrity and international legitimacy on which any future claim to statehood depends. Failure to achieve even this could accelerate the fragmentation and annexation dynamics that would make Palestinian statehood permanently unachievable.

The outcome of the current transition will depend less on the volume of reforms announced than on whether reform restores confidence among Palestinians and safeguards the institutional unity required for statehood. The window created by UNSCR 2803 is limited. If leadership reform and transitional governance fail to strengthen legitimacy and preserve the link between the West Bank and Gaza, the process is more likely to close the pathway to Palestinian statehood than advance it.

07 Recommendations

This chapter draws together the recommendations set out throughout the research paper, grouped by the actor responsible and sequenced to reflect the fact that the Palestinian leadership, Arab states or international actors cannot act on every front simultaneously. Immediate actions are those that can and should begin now; short-term actions are those that should take place before December 2027; medium-term actions depend on progress being made on the steps that precede them. For a useful summary please see the table in Appendix 1.

Palestinian leadership and institutions

— **Convene a PLO-led structured national dialogue (immediate)**

The PLO Executive Committee should convene a structured dialogue bringing together the PA, the major factions (including Fatah and Hamas) and representatives from across Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as civil society organizations, professional unions and youth and women constituencies. Representatives of refugee communities and the diaspora must be included. The pathway to statehood depends on a degree of national consensus. Earlier efforts, such as the Beijing Declaration of July 2024, have stalled because they were limited to factional considerations and produced declarations without sequencing or follow-up.

The broader dialogue should therefore work to a published agenda, timetable and secretariat, with Arab hosts or guarantors such as Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and its outputs should feed directly into the national action plan recommended below.

— **Embed the EU–PA reform matrix within a Palestinian-owned reform programme (immediate)**

The PA cabinet, together with the PLO Executive Committee, should formally adopt, endorse and expand the existing EU–PA reform matrix as the basis for a single Palestinian-owned reform programme, with clear institutional responsibilities, benchmarks and timelines. It should cover fiscal transparency, civil service restructuring, judicial independence and security-sector accountability. Each area should have a named lead institution (for example, the Ministry

of Finance, the General Personnel Council, the Higher Judicial Council and relevant security bodies), together with benchmarks and deadlines. A programme that originates inside Palestinian institutions is harder to dismiss as imposed or to interpret selectively. It also gives donors one reference point, which supports the common reform framework recommended for international actors.

The PA's 2008–10 Reform and Development Plan and its 2009 state-building programme show that Palestinian-authored plans can secure donor alignment and measurable results. However, these were also largely technocratic and lacked political legitimacy. The new programme should therefore be anchored in the national dialogue and formally endorsed by both the cabinet and the PLO.

— **Establish Palestinian-led reporting and monitoring (immediate)**

The reform programme should be tracked by a Palestinian-run monitoring body, independent of donor control, that publishes regular progress reports against the agreed benchmarks in Arabic and English. It could draw on Palestinian civil society, professional associations and research institutions, and its findings should be submitted to the BoP and the UN so that reporting under UNSCR 2803 reflects Palestinian evidence. Without it, progress claims are likely to lose credibility with the Palestinian public and donors alike.

The reporting should include a credible polling exercise among Palestinians in Gaza. It should be fielded by experienced Palestinian research institutions, with the methodology published in advance and sampling that does not depend on the outdated civil registry. This would complement, and allow comparison with, the UN-commissioned exercise recommended for international actors.

— **Preserve institutional links between Gaza and the West Bank (short term)**

The PA, the PLO and the NCAG should formalize a standing coordination mechanism, building on the PA–BoP Joint Coordination Office, which has convened at least three times. The PA ministries concerned should keep Gaza's civil and land registries, civil service payroll and legal reference systems within central PA systems. The NCAG should operate under Palestinian law, as provision 6 of the July 2026 roadmap requires. No Gaza-specific legal or administrative track should be created. The end point of the transition must be made explicit (see the red lines on the NCAG mandate below). There is no close precedent for a transitional administration nested within a national authority. The nearest lesson is the PA's own history, in which an interim body became permanent.

— **Revision of succession procedures to enable peaceful transition of power (immediate)**

President Abbas holds four leadership posts – he is president of both the State of Palestine and the PA, as well as the head of the PLO and Fatah. The serving president's advanced age and the uncertainty surrounding national elections at this critical juncture of the Palestinian national project, increase the urgency of establishing transparent, professional and credible succession mechanisms in all legitimate Palestinian political institutions.

Palestinian lawmakers and policymakers should undertake a comprehensive review of the existing legislative framework, including the Palestinian Basic Law of 2003, which serves as the constitutional framework for the PA and includes important provisions that have been suspended for more than two decades. Subsequent presidential decrees and constitutional amendments must also undergo a review with the objective of establishing a clear, credible and coherent legal and institutional framework for succession procedures consistent with democratic principles. For the best chance of success, the process must be grounded in inclusive consultations with political factions and civil society organizations and treated as a priority within a programme of genuine reform.

— **Constitution-drafting consultations are an important tool for institutional reform (immediate)**

The constitution-making process and related consultations are an opportunity to review the status of the Palestinian institutional structure and identify any gaps. The drafting committee should publish the revised document that followed the consultation process, listing the main concerns raised in the public review and how they were addressed. Additional consultations should be undertaken if needed.

A robust outreach plan should accompany the revision, with accessible feedback channels, online consultation for Gaza and the diaspora, and extended timelines where conditions require. Adoption of a constitutional draft by presidential decree should be avoided, given that unilateral decrees have already eroded public trust. South Africa's 1994–96 constitution-making process, which was built around a dedicated public participation programme, shows how consultation can lend legitimacy to a founding document. Even if no constitution results from the current process, the consultation itself has value for institutional reform.

— **Consider the drafting of a national charter that revamps the Palestinian national project and sets national priorities (immediate)**

The constitution-making process and related consultations raised important debate on the trajectory of the Palestinian national project. This debate offers a basis for producing a national charter that sets national priorities. The proposed structured national dialogue above could give birth to such a founding document.

— **Clarify the relationship between the PNC, PLC and NCAG (immediate)**

The PLO Executive Committee and the PA presidency – with the support of legal, constitutional and electoral experts – should introduce a framework defining the relationship between their respective legislative bodies, the PNC and the PLC, clarifying how they relate to the NCAG before any electoral timetable is finalized.

Clarity is urgently required following the postponement of the PLC elections, the August 2026 decision to restore the PLC to 132 seats and the ongoing process to select PNC members. The relationship with the NCAG creates an additional layer of institutional uncertainty. The NCAG is unelected, its mandate runs to December 2027 (with the possibility of an extension), and its relationship to an

elected legislature is undefined. The framework should set out the competences of both the PNC and the PLC, clarify which legislates in Gaza during the NCAG's mandate, and be consistent with other institutional reforms. The process of producing the framework should also seek advance assurances from Arab states and international partners on whether an elected PLC would be recognized as part of a reformed PA. Without this, the status of the elected body, and therefore acceptance of the results, are likely to remain contested.

— **Begin the legal, technical and consultative groundwork for national elections (immediate)**

Elections cannot be held immediately. While the 10 October 2026 decree sets 11 September 2027 for elections, Israeli restrictions, divisions among Palestinian factions and the unresolved Hamas question remain obstacles. Preparation should nonetheless start now, led by the Central Elections Commission with full support from all institutions. A priority must be given to updating the voter registry, particularly in Gaza.

The Central Elections Commission should also publish its budget and timetable and finalize the legal framework for elections. International actors have a significant role in securing access for domestic and international observers as well as in the planning for elections in East Jerusalem. Israel's refusal to confirm whether voting can take place in Jerusalem remains a major obstacle. Therefore, discussions must include the feasibility and scope of elections in East Jerusalem and their centrality to the entire elections process. Limited and or phased voting for East Jerusalem should be considered. Securing a clear international commitment to accept the results should be part of this groundwork.

— **Build consensus on a limited set of national priorities (short term)**

The outputs of the national dialogue should be consolidated into three to five headline priorities for governance reform and elections. The PLO Executive Committee, with the PA cabinet and the dialogue secretariat, should then translate UNSCR 2803 into a detailed national action plan, with objectives, timelines, roles and responsibilities.

Focusing on a short list prevents reform from dissipating across too many fronts. A coherent national position also gives Palestinians a stronger basis for shaping transitional arrangements and engaging the BoP, rather than reacting to them.

— **Define clear red lines on any extension of the NCAG mandate (short term)**

Through the national dialogue, Palestinian leaders should agree the conditions that must be met before any extension of the NCAG's mandate beyond December 2027. Examples include a published handover timetable with milestones, continued application of Palestinian law, no separate legislative or revenue authority, and periodic review with sunset provisions. The PA was itself created as a five-year interim body and became permanent, so without an agreed exit the NCAG could follow the same path by default.

Agreeing these terms in advance could prevent a last-minute choice between accepting externally set conditions and rejecting the arrangement. These conditions should be communicated to the BoP, Arab states and UN Security Council members well before the mandate expires, ideally before the September 2027 elections.

— **Introduce a youth quota and non-discriminatory electoral legislation (short term)**

The electoral law should be amended, after public consultation rather than by decree alone, to include a youth quota for candidate lists. The existing gender quota in Palestinian electoral law provides a drafting precedent. A conducive environment for political activity and protection of political freedoms should be guaranteed.

Candidacy conditions should be objective, published and subject to judicial review. This includes reconsidering the January 2026 requirement that candidates commit in writing to the PLO programme to address concerns that were raised by CSOs following the amendment. Political structures should also be opened to young people without fear of prosecution, through explicit legal protections for candidates and activists and a public commitment by the security services.

— **Sequence elections deliberately (medium term)**

The 10 October 2026 decree currently schedules simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections for 11 September 2027. Whether presidential and parliamentary elections are held simultaneously or in sequence should be decided through broad consultations guided by the national interest and by a realistic assessment of the logistical and technical requirements needed to ensure credible elections. Setting an electoral timeline must not be a substitute for ensuring that clear and consistent succession measures are in place. International pressure on Israel is needed to enable the electoral process to take place throughout all its stages.

Arab states

— **Support and advocate for Palestinian-driven and Palestinian-led, inclusive reform that is guided by domestic priorities and the national agenda (immediate)**

Technical fixes alone will not foster domestic legitimacy essential for sustainable reform. Acknowledgment and endorsement of completed reform processes is essential for progress.

Reforms that emerge from Palestinian priorities are more likely to command public confidence, secure political buy-in and produce lasting institutional change than measures perceived as externally imposed.

— **Conditional disbursement of reconstruction funding (immediate)**

Arab states should structure reconstruction financing in phased disbursements tied to governance, transparency and security benchmarks. This provides a mechanism for encouraging reform while aligning financial support with improvements in public administration and service delivery.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar could release funding in tranches linked to progress in governance formation, financial transparency and security consolidation. Disbursements could be tied to audited payroll systems, functioning municipal services and the deployment of unified police units. For this to be meaningful, supporting countries must acknowledge and endorse progress as benchmarks are met.

— **Joint approval of major reconstruction projects (immediate)**

Arab states should require major reconstruction projects to receive joint approval from the NCAG, the BoP and donor representatives. Joint approval helps align governance and financing decisions while strengthening political and financial accountability. Coordination with the PA is necessary for preserving the link between reconstruction and the path to Palestinian statehood.

A shared approval process would reduce duplication, minimize delays and ensure that projects are consistent with wider reconstruction and governance priorities.

— **Escrow mechanisms and controlled payments (short term)**

Arab states should channel reconstruction financing through jointly governed escrow accounts and controlled payment systems. These arrangements strengthen transparency and reduce opportunities for diversion or political capture.

Payments could be made directly to contractors, suppliers and public employees rather than through intermediary political bodies. This would allow donors to maintain oversight while supporting implementation.

— **Strengthening PA institutions (immediate)**

Arab states should ensure that reconstruction financing strengthens Palestinian institutions rather than creates parallel governance structures. Preserving institutional unity is essential for maintaining links between Gaza and the West Bank and supporting future statehood.

Donor support should therefore be channelled through mechanisms linked to the PA's central financial accounting systems and established public institutions wherever practicable.

— **Technical support and capacity-building (short term)**

Arab states should second technical advisers into NCAG-linked institutions to support implementation and strengthen administrative capacity. Building effective institutions will require practical expertise alongside financial support.

Project managers, security advisers, administrative coordinators and audit teams could work within key ministries and delivery units while preserving Palestinian ownership of decision-making.

— **Salary financing and administrative compliance (medium term)**

Where Arab states contribute to public sector salaries, payments should be linked to verified employment and compliance with agreed administrative standards. Salary support can strengthen institutional coherence when tied to accountability measures.

Verification mechanisms could include attendance records, payroll audits and compliance reviews designed to support effective governance and reduce patronage practices.

— **Legal and administrative coordination (medium term)**

Arab states should support legal and administrative coordination between Gaza and the West Bank. Preserving institutional links will be important for future reintegration and the development of coherent governance arrangements.

Jordan and Egypt are well placed to assist this process given the influence of their legal systems on the West Bank and Gaza, respectively.

— **Regional social and economic connectivity (medium term)**

Arab states should invest in regional social and economic connectivity between Palestinians and their neighbours. Stronger regional links can support recovery, reduce isolation and expand opportunities for economic development.

This could include partnerships involving businesses, universities, schools, cultural institutions and sporting organizations, alongside educational exchanges, professional networks and regional tourism initiatives.

International actors (US, EU and UK)

— **Act to halt the accelerating annexation of Palestinian land (immediate)**

The US, EU and UK should use sustained diplomatic pressure to halt the accelerating annexation of Palestinian land. This requires coordinated positions on settlement expansion, settler violence and measures that erode Palestinian territorial integrity, expressed consistently in public statements, bilateral engagement and multilateral forums.

Without credible limits on annexation, efforts to support Palestinian reform and reconstruction risk being undermined on the ground. Aligned diplomatic messaging, backed by clear consequences for actions that alter the status of Palestinian territory, would help protect the prospects for a viable, contiguous Palestinian state and the unified governance that reform efforts seek to restore.

— **Preserve institutional integration and establish a pathway to Palestinian administration (immediate)**

International actors should ensure that transitional governance arrangements in Gaza remain administratively linked to Palestinian institutions from the outset. Civil registries, public financial management systems, service delivery

mechanisms and personnel records should remain connected across Gaza and the West Bank, while support for the NCAG should be tied to a defined pathway towards Palestinian administration.

This will require active coordination between the PA, the PLO and the NCAG. International actors can support this process by providing technical assistance, dedicated personnel and financial support to help integrate administrative systems and preserve institutional continuity. Working through existing Palestinian structures, retaining experienced civil servants and maintaining continuity of core public services such as health, education and utilities will reduce disruption, preserve institutional memory and limit the emergence of parallel governance systems.

— **Ensure reform benchmarks are independently verified and publicly reported (short term)**

Reform benchmarks should be agreed in advance, assessed by a neutral multilateral mechanism and reported publicly. A UN-backed mechanism would work best, for example, the Office of the UN Special Coordinator with a technical secretariat from the World Bank or an independent research body. Neither Israel nor any single donor should hold a veto over the benchmarks or the assessments. Palestinian institutions, including the Palestinian-led monitoring body recommended above, and civil society should have a formal channel to submit evidence. Transparent monitoring would strengthen accountability, improve donor confidence and reduce disputes regarding implementation and progress.

Other cases show that this model is workable. The PA is also familiar with parts of it, since World Bank and IMF assessments have long fed into the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), the main donor coordination forum for Palestinians. Three features recur in the other cases. The benchmarks are limited in number and fixed in advance, an independent body verifies them and the reports are published. The three examples are:

— **The EU's Cooperation and Verification Mechanism for Bulgaria and Romania (2007–2023).** The European Commission assessed judicial reform and anti-corruption against benchmarks set at accession and published regular reports.

— **Colombia's 2016 peace agreement.** The Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame provides independent technical verification of implementation, and its findings are published and publicly accessible.

— **Northern Ireland's Oversight Commissioner for Policing Reform (2000–2007).** The Commissioner reported publicly on implementation of the Patten Commission's police reform recommendations. This is a relevant precedent for the security-sector element of the Palestinian reform programme.

The Afghanistan Compact (2006) is a cautionary example. Its Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board tracked benchmarks across many sectors, but their number and ambition outpaced capacity. A short, prioritized list, like the three to five national priorities recommended above, would help avoid this.

— **Protect Palestinian fiscal stability (immediate)**

The US, EU and UK should use sustained diplomatic engagement to keep Palestinian public institutions and commercial banks financially viable. This includes opposing the arbitrary withholding of clearance revenues and protecting correspondent-banking relationships so that Palestinian institutions and businesses retain access to international financial systems.

— **Condition reconstruction financing on clear PA–NCAG responsibilities (short term)**

Before committing large-scale reconstruction financing, donors should require revenue, expenditure and administrative responsibilities to be clearly allocated between the PA and the NCAG and published in a transparent manner. Doing so would strengthen accountability and reduce the risk of competing institutional authorities.

— **Support Palestinian civil society and local ownership (medium term)**

International actors should invest in Palestinian civil society and ensure meaningful participation by municipalities, professional associations, businesses and community organizations in reconstruction planning, contracting and implementation, and in reform efforts. Broad participation strengthens legitimacy, supports democratic renewal and improves the prospects for sustainable recovery.

— **Support a time-bound link between Hamas's disarmament and political transition (short term)**

Support for Palestinian political reform should encourage a sequenced process linking disarmament, political transition and future political participation. International and regional actors can help by providing guarantees and monitoring mechanisms that reduce uncertainty and encourage compliance with agreed arrangements.

— **Strengthen Palestinian economic and social connectivity (medium term)**

International actors should support initiatives that reconnect Gaza with the wider Palestinian economy and society. Priority should be given to educational partnerships, professional exchanges, private sector cooperation and programmes that strengthen links between communities in Gaza and the West Bank.

— **Ensure temporary governance arrangements support long-term Palestinian governance (medium term)**

The NCAG and associated transitional mechanisms should be subject to regular review and sunset provisions. Temporary arrangements should not evolve into permanent structures that weaken prospects for unified Palestinian governance.

Reconstruction assistance should also be delivered in ways that strengthen Palestinian institutional capacity and legitimacy. Where possible, programmes should work through Palestinian institutions rather than rely indefinitely on international delivery mechanisms, helping to prepare the ground for effective self-government and statehood.

Recognizing states

— **Coordinate positions on settlements, governance arrangements and negotiation timelines (short term)**

Fragmented, unilateral positions let Israel and other parties treat each state's stance in isolation and dilute the effect of any single measure. Recognizing states should agree common positions on settlement expansion, annexation, the governance arrangements for Gaza and the timetable for negotiations, and state them consistently in public statements, bilateral engagement and multilateral forums. Recognition by more than 150 states carries real leverage only if it is exercised collectively.

Existing groupings offer a base for this: the EU, the Arab League and the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution. One approach would be for recognizing states to align their positions with those of the US, EU and UK on annexation and the common reform framework, so that Palestinian leaders face one set of expectations. The UK's sanctions on settlements, supported by France and Canada, show that coordinated measures are achievable.

— **Upgrade diplomatic missions to full embassies and expand bilateral agreements (medium term)**

States that recognize Palestine should upgrade their representative offices to full embassies and conclude bilateral agreements in areas such as trade, taxation and aviation. These steps do not resolve the underlying constraints on sovereignty, but they build the administrative and diplomatic infrastructure of statehood and treat Palestine as a functioning state actor. This process would also connect Palestinian institutions with counterparts and legal frameworks for routine government-to-government business, which recognition alone does not provide. Agreements should be sequenced by practicality. Taxation and trade agreements can take effect now, while aviation agreements may initially be preparatory, given current restrictions on Palestinian air access. States that have already extended recognition, including those that did so in 2025, could lead, with others following as their own processes allow. Where appropriate, bilateral agreements can also be paired with direct budgetary support, alongside humanitarian assistance, to sustain institutional continuity.

— **Extend preferential trade access and facilitate banking and financial connectivity (medium term)**

Recognizing states should grant preferential market access for Palestinian goods and services, accept Palestinian standards and certifications, simplify customs procedures and encourage private sector investment and commercial partnerships. Preferential access on paper is of limited value if Palestinian exporters cannot meet foreign standards or rely on routes controlled by Israel. Recognizing Palestinian certification and simplifying customs procedures should address that gap directly. Existing arrangements, for example, the EU–PLO Interim Association Agreement, show that such approaches are not new, but their benefits depend on practical implementation.

Banking connectivity is a priority area. Palestinian banks remain tied to Israeli banks and the shekel under the 1994 Paris Protocol. Although Israel's two largest banks previously signalled their intention to end correspondent-banking services for Palestinian banks, those arrangements have been temporarily extended to the end of 2026. Recognizing states could support direct correspondent-banking arrangements with banks in Jordan, Egypt, the EU and the Gulf, working with the Palestine Monetary Authority. This would reduce the risk that Palestinian banks lose access to cross-border financial services.

— **Support Palestinian participation in international institutions and back legal proceedings in international courts (medium term)**

Recognizing states should support Palestinian participation in international organizations and treaty frameworks, coordinate their positions in multilateral forums including the UN General Assembly, and back Palestinian engagement with international legal mechanisms and courts. Recognition becomes meaningful when it translates into functional international status. The UN General Assembly's May 2024 resolution, which expanded Palestine's participation rights and recommended that the Security Council reconsider its application for full membership, gives states a concrete basis for further action. States can contribute by voting and speaking consistently in these forums, offering technical and legal support to Palestinian institutions, and cooperating with the findings of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court within their own legal systems. This strengthens Palestine's legal status and its capacity to act as a state in the international system.

— **Support initiatives addressing Gaza–West Bank fragmentation through recognition-linked programming (medium term)**

Recognizing states should treat fragmentation between Gaza and the West Bank as a central priority. Bilateral cooperation, development funding and technical assistance should be designed to reinforce institutional links rather than serve either territory in isolation. Without such measures, recognition risks proceeding while the territorial and institutional split that undermines statehood hardens. In practice, this means funding programmes that span both territories and work through Palestinian institutions. Examples are unified civil registries and civil service payroll, health referral systems, links between universities and schools, and professional exchanges.

To date, European budget support to the PA through the PEGASE mechanism has included salaries and pensions in the West Bank and Gaza, which shows that financing can sustain these links. States could also make new cooperation agreements conditional on arrangements that preserve Gaza–West Bank integration, in line with the connectivity measures recommended for Arab states and other international actors.

Appendix 1. Policy implementation matrix: Recommendations and consequences

Actor	Recommended action	Time frame	Indicator of progress	Consequence (if not taken)
Palestinian leadership	Convene a PLO-led structured national dialogue	Immediate	Number and range of participants, including factions (Fatah, Hamas and independents) and civil society, professional union, youth, women, refugee and diaspora representatives, in a PLO-convened dialogue, with a published agenda and timetable.	Factional fragmentation deepens, weakening any single voice able to negotiate reform.
	Embed the EU–PA reform matrix within a Palestinian-owned reform programme	Immediate	A single reform strategy document, authored by Palestinian institutions (not donor drafted), formally adopted by the PA cabinet and/or PLO Executive Committee.	Reform stays externally defined and vulnerable to being dismissed as imposed.
	Establish Palestinian-led reporting and monitoring	Immediate	A Palestinian-run monitoring body, independent of donor control, is established and publishes its first progress report against agreed benchmarks.	Benchmarks and progress claims lose credibility with the Palestinian public and donors.
	Preserve institutional links between Gaza and the West Bank	Short term	Continued operation of unified ministries and a single civil-service payroll spanning Gaza and the West Bank, with no separate Gaza-only legal or administrative track.	Temporary administrative separation hardens into durable political partition.
	Revision of succession procedures to enable peaceful transition of power	Immediate	Adoption of transparent, professional and credible succession mechanisms in all Palestinian political institutions that Palestinians recognize as legitimate.	A failed transition could trigger violence and descent into chaos, which could dangerously escalate under military occupation.
	Use constitution-drafting consultations as a tool for institutional reform	Immediate	A revised draft published together with a list of the concerns raised in the public review and how they were addressed, with additional consultations held where needed and no adoption by presidential decree.	Gaps in the institutional structure go unaddressed, and a rushed or exclusive process entrenches executive power rather than resolving it.
	Consider drafting a national charter that sets national priorities	Medium term	A draft national charter, produced through the structured national dialogue, setting out national priorities for the Palestinian national project.	The debate raised by the constitution-making process dissipates without producing a shared national direction.
	Clarify the relationship between the PNC, PLC and NCAG as part of a strategic political reform agenda	Immediate	A published position or framework document, from the PLO, PA and/or NCAG, explicitly defining how the three bodies relate to one another, including whether and how an elected PLC would be recognized as part of a reformed PA.	Elected PLC's status remains contested, undermining the legitimacy of the body reform is meant to revive.
	Begin legal, technical and consultative groundwork for national elections	Immediate	Voter-registry update rate (percentage of eligible population registered), election law drafted or amended, and a published Central Elections Commission budget and timetable.	Elections slip indefinitely, prolonging the legitimacy vacuum.
	Build consensus on a limited set of national priorities	Short term	A published, prioritized reform agenda (e.g. three to five headline priorities) agreed across factions and institutions, rather than an open-ended list.	Reform effort dissipates across too many fronts, achieving none convincingly.

Actor	Recommended action	Time frame	Indicator of progress	Consequence (if not taken)
	Define clear red lines on NCAG mandate extension	Short term	Published, time-bound criteria or a sunset clause governing any extension of the NCAG's mandate, agreed by Palestinian leadership.	NCAG becomes a *de facto* permanent authority by default.
	Introduce a youth quota and non-discriminatory electoral legislation	Short term	Electoral-law amendment passed or formally tabled, specifying a minimum youth-candidate quota and removing discriminatory eligibility criteria.	Younger generation remains excluded, fuelling disengagement.
	Sequence elections deliberately	Medium term	An official election roadmap, developed through wide consultation and based on the logistical and technical feasibility of credible processes, with the sequence and dates of presidential and parliamentary elections published and clear succession measures in place.	Elections are scheduled without consultation or a feasibility assessment, or as a substitute for clear succession measures, undermining the credibility of the process.
Arab States	Support and advocate for Palestinian-driven and Palestinian-led, inclusive reform that is guided by the Palestinian priorities and national agenda	Immediate	Public and active support of Palestinian national consultations on national priorities and public endorsement of reform process milestones.	Risk of externally imposed reform agenda that will be rejected by the Palestinian people resulting in unsustainable implementation. Lack of endorsement of reform progress would risk cementing the separation of the governance structures between Gaza and the West Bank.
	Structure reconstruction financing in phased disbursements	Immediate	A published disbursement schedule tying funding tranches to verified governance or reform milestones, rather than lump-sum transfers.	Funds are disbursed without reform leverage, removing incentives for governance progress.
	Require joint approval of major reconstruction projects	Immediate	Existence of a joint NCAG–BoP (or equivalent) project-approval mechanism, and a share of major reconstruction projects cleared through this process rather than initiated unilaterally.	Unilateral or duplicative projects fragment authority between the NCAG and BoP.
	Channel financing through jointly governed escrow mechanisms	Short term	Establishment of an escrow account with joint Palestinian-donor oversight, and reconstruction funds routed through it.	Diversion or rent-seeking undermines donor confidence and public trust.
	Ensure reconstruction financing reinforces PA institutions, not parallel structures	Immediate	Share of reconstruction funding channelled through, or aligned with, existing PA ministries versus new donor-created implementing bodies.	Donor-run parallel systems entrench Gaza's separation from PA authority.
	Second technical advisers into NCAG-linked institutions	Short term	Number of seconded technical advisers placed in NCAG-linked institutions, with defined capacity-transfer and exit timelines.	Institutional capacity gaps persist, slowing the return to full Palestinian administration.
	Link salary financing to verified employment and compliance	Medium term	Share of PA/NCAG payroll subject to independent employment-verification audits before disbursement.	Payroll becomes a tool of factional patronage rather than institutional discipline.
	Support legal and administrative coordination between Gaza and the West Bank	Medium term	A joint legal and administrative coordination mechanism between Gaza and West Bank institutions, drawing on Jordanian and Egyptian legal expertise, with a published work plan for harmonizing legislation and administrative procedures.	Legal and administrative systems in Gaza and the West Bank diverge, complicating future reintegration.

Actor	Recommended action	Time frame	Indicator of progress	Consequence (if not taken)
	Invest in regional social and economic connectivity	Medium term	Increased number and value of new regional infrastructure, trade or labour-mobility agreements linking Gaza and the West Bank to neighbouring Arab economies.	Gaza and the West Bank drift further from the region and each other.
International actors	Act to halt the accelerating annexation of Palestinian land	Immediate	Verified halt or reversal in settlement expansion, outpost legalization and land-seizure orders in the West Bank, tracked against independent monitoring data (e.g. UN OCHA).	The territorial basis for a Palestinian state disappears before reform can take place.
	Preserve institutional integration between Gaza and the West Bank and establish a pathway to reintegration	Short term	Continuation of unified legal, civil-service and regulatory frameworks, with no Gaza-specific parallel systems introduced; retention of existing PA civil servants and institutional staff, and continuity of core public services (health, education, utilities); and a published timeline and sunset clause for NCAG-to-PA handover, with intermediate milestones and dates.	The NCAG evolves into a separate governing system rather than a bridge, institutional memory is lost and services are disrupted, and a temporary arrangement with no built-in exit becomes open-ended.
	Ensure reform benchmarks are defined in advance, independently verified and publicly reported	Short term	Benchmarks published before the assessment period begins, with verification by an independent body not controlled by a single state or donor and regular (e.g. quarterly) public progress reports published in Arabic and English, with underlying data made available.	An effective Israeli veto over benchmarks discredits the process among Palestinians, and opacity fuels suspicion that reform is externally choreographed.
	Protect Palestinian fiscal stability	Immediate	PA's ability to pay public sector salaries in full and on time, and sufficient donor budget support relative to the PA's financing gap.	PA institutions become unable to pay salaries or function, collapsing reform capacity.
	Condition financing on clear PA–NCAG revenue and expenditure allocation	Short term	A published, agreed revenue and expenditure allocation framework between the PA and NCAG, with donor financing explicitly conditioned on it.	Overlapping or contested financial authority undermines accountability for both bodies.
	Tie support for the NCAG to a clear pathway back to Palestinian administration	Short term	A published timeline and sunset clause for NCAG-to-PA handover, with intermediate milestones and dates.	A temporary arrangement with no built-in exit becomes open-ended.
	Prioritize administrative continuity during the transition	Immediate	Retention rate of existing PA civil servants and institutional staff through the transition, and continuity of core public services (health, education, utilities).	Loss of institutional memory disrupts services and delays PA resumption of authority.
Recognizing states	Coordinate donor conditionality	Short term	Existence of a shared donor-conditionality framework or matrix jointly agreed by major donors, rather than divergent bilateral conditions.	Competing donor conditions create parallel governance centres.
	Protect and invest in Palestinian civil society and support local ownership of reconstruction	Medium term	Trends in the number of active, registered Palestinian civil society organizations, funding flows to them, and absence of new restrictive NGO legislation; and a rise in the share of reconstruction planning, contracts and implementation roles held by Palestinian institutions and local actors versus international implementers.	Civic space narrows, weakening the base for credible elections, and reconstruction lacks legitimacy and sustainability without local Palestinian buy-in.

Actor	Recommended action	Time frame	Indicator of progress	Consequence (if not taken)
	Support a time-bound link between Hamas's disarmament and its political transition	Short term	A published, time-bound framework linking Hamas's decommissioning of weapons to a guarantee of unimpeded electoral participation, jointly endorsed by regional (Arab states) and international (US/BoP) actors.	Reconciliation and disarmament remain deadlocked, and elections stay indefinitely blocked by the unresolved Hamas question.
	Strengthen Palestinian economic and social connectivity	Medium term	Higher trade and movement of goods, people and labour between Gaza, the West Bank and the wider Palestinian economy.	Gaza's isolation from the wider Palestinian economy deepens.
	Prevent normalization of temporary governance arrangements	Medium term	A binding sunset clause or periodic review requirement in force for the NCAG/BoP, with no legislative or practical steps taken to extend it indefinitely.	The NCAG becomes permanent by default, absent review and sunset provisions.
	Coordinate collectively on positions	Short term	Existence of joint statements or coordinated diplomatic action (e.g. EU, Arab League, or other multilateral groupings) rather than fragmented unilateral positions.	A fragmented recognition process dilutes collective diplomatic leverage.
	Upgrade diplomatic missions to full embassies and expand agreements	Medium term	A number of states upgrading representative offices to full embassies, and bilateral agreements signed with the State of Palestine.	Recognition remains symbolic without practical diplomatic or economic weight.
	Extend preferential trade access and banking connectivity	Medium term	Increased number and value of preferential trade arrangements and correspondent-banking agreements extended to Palestinian institutions.	The Palestinian economy remains isolated despite growing diplomatic recognition.
	Support Palestinian participation in international institutions	Medium term	Palestine's membership or participation status in UN agencies and other international bodies, including outcomes of full UN membership votes.	Recognition does not translate into functional international standing.
	Support initiatives addressing Gaza–West Bank fragmentation	Medium term	Number and scale of diplomatic or funding initiatives explicitly targeting Gaza–West Bank reintegration.	Recognition proceeds without addressing the territorial split that undermines statehood.

Appendix 2. Timeline (UNSCR 2803 to end of 2027)

Date	Milestone
September 2025	Abbas commits to hold parliamentary and presidential elections within one year of the end of Israel's war on Gaza
October 2025	Constitutional declaration on presidential succession issued, transferring interim authority to the PLO Executive Committee deputy chair (bypassing the non-functional PLC)
11 November 2025	Presidents Macron and Abbas meet in Paris; launch of a joint committee to draft a Palestinian constitution
17 November 2025	UNSCR 2803 adopted – opens the two-year transition period
January 2026	BoP establishes the NCAG
9 February–10 April 2026	Public review period for the draft interim constitution of the State of Palestine
25 April 2026	Municipal elections held – first stage of the announced 'year of Palestinian democracy' electoral calendar
May 2026	Fatah internal elections held (per the announced calendar)
17 May 2026	Deadline for the first UNSCR 2803 paragraph 9 progress report on PA reform
3 June 2026	First meeting of the newly elected Fatah Central Committee; Hussein al-Sheikh elected deputy leader
July 2026	Israel's two largest banks (Bank Hapoalim and Israel Discount Bank) notify Palestinian banks of intent to terminate correspondent-banking relationships
31 August 2026	Israel Discount Bank agrees to postpone its planned 1 September cut-off of correspondent-banking services to Palestinian banks until 31 December 2026
1 September 2026	Bank Hapoalim agrees to postpone its planned 1 October cut-off until 31 December 2026
10 October 2026	Presidential decree postpones the legislative elections and sets 11 September 2027 as the new date for simultaneous presidential and legislative elections
1 November 2026	PNC elections. At the time of writing, the elections had not yet taken place
28 November 2026	Date originally announced for PLC elections; postponed by the 10 October 2026 decree
11 September 2027	Simultaneous presidential and PLC elections (announced date, per the 10 October 2026 decree)
December 2027	NCAG transitional mandate expires (subject to renewal); reformed PA expected to reassume full administrative authority over Gaza and the West Bank; end of the UNSCR 2803 two-year transition window

Some of the dates are announced dates and not confirmed outcomes.

Glossary of institutions and actors

Term	What it is	Constituency/basis of authority	Succession/renewal
Hamas (Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya)	Palestinian Islamist political and armed movement. Won a majority of seats in the 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections and established *de facto* rule in Gaza in 2007. Announced the dissolution of its government oversight body in July 2026 but retains substantial influence in areas under its control. It is outside the PLO and is designated a terrorist organization by the US, EU and UK, among others.	Supporters in Gaza, the West Bank and the Palestinian diaspora; it does not represent all Palestinians in these communities.	Leadership renewed through internal elections and selection by Shura councils, generally on a four-year cycle, although war and leadership losses have disrupted arrangements. These are internal organizational processes, rather than public elections.
PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization)	The umbrella political body recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, including the diaspora; conducts diplomacy and foreign relations.	All Palestinians, including those outside the occupied territories.	Chairperson historically drawn from Fatah leadership; PLO Executive Committee deputy chair now first in line for interim presidential succession.
PA (Palestinian Authority)	The administrative and governing body established by the Oslo Accords, with limited self-governing powers in parts of the West Bank (and formerly Gaza).	Residents of the West Bank and Gaza.	President assumes office via PA succession rules; PA institutions receive international funding and aid.
Presidency/ State of Palestine	The presidency formally represents the 'State of Palestine', the entity that holds UN observer-state status (since 2012) and engages in diplomatic relations.	Palestinians collectively, as represented internationally.	Vice president of the State of Palestine (currently also PLO Executive Committee deputy chair) assumes interim presidential duties for up to 90 days (renewable once) if the presidency becomes vacant, per the October 2025 constitutional declaration.
PLC (Palestinian Legislative Council)	The PA's parliament, established under the Oslo framework; last elected in 2006 and non-functional since, having been formally dissolved by presidential decree in 2018.	Elected by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.	Elections originally announced for 28 November 2026 were postponed by presidential decree on 10 October 2026; now announced for 11 September 2027, alongside presidential elections. Until then, its legislative role is not being exercised.
PNC (Palestinian National Council)	The PLO's legislative/parliamentary body, representing Palestinians including the diaspora.	All Palestinians, including those outside the occupied territories.	Elections originally announced for 1 November 2026, but fulfilment of the body's diaspora seats already started in September 2026 through appointments and electoral assemblies. PLC members are expected to be incorporated into the PNC. PLC elections now scheduled for September 2027.
Fatah	The dominant political faction within the PLO and PA leadership; holds internal elections for its own leadership bodies (separate from PA/ PLO elections).	Fatah's own membership and Central Committee/ General Congress.	New leader elected by the Fatah General Congress per its 2009 charter; Fatah Central Committee elected in 2026, with Hussein al-Sheikh elected deputy leader on 3 June 2026.
NCAG (National Committee for the Administration of Gaza)	An interim, technocratic body of 15 Palestinian members established under the BoP to govern day-to-day administration, service delivery and reconstruction in Gaza.	Gaza's population, administered on a transitional basis.	Mandate runs to December 2027, subject to renewal; intended to transfer full authority back to a reformed PA at the end of the transition.
BoP (Board of Peace)	The international oversight body established under UNSCR 2803 and the US-brokered Gaza peace framework, chaired by the US, providing political and financial oversight of Gaza's transition.	International/regional stakeholders (US, without formal EU or UK membership).	Established under UNSCR 2803; timeline tied to the same two-year transition.

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Cover image: Demonstrators stage a protest to thank countries for recognizing the State of Palestine, to demand an end to Israeli attacks on Gaza and to support Palestinian self-determination, Ramallah, West Bank, September 2025.
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