



The Egyptian Cabinet  
Information and Decision Support Center

**IDSC**  
**Policy Perspective**



## **Egypt's Vision for Settling Israeli Occupation of Palestine**



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## **IDSC Policy Perspective**

A non-periodic publication issued by the Cabinet's Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC). It covers the most prominent topics in the scene from all aspects to present a comprehensive vision regarding such topics relying on experts' perspectives.

**The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or perspective of IDSC**

## **IDSC's Commentary**

The Palestinian issue has been at the top of the Egyptian State's foreign policy priorities since 1948. Egypt tries to settle the issue through a comprehensive and just solution based on the principles of international law, UN charters, and relevant international legitimacy resolutions.

The Egyptian vision for resolving the issue of Israel's occupation was historically based on the principle of the two-state solution. Egypt has consistently called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem being its capital. It also supported the principle of "land for peace", the right of Palestinian people to self-determination, the right of return, and ending the settlement expansion on the occupied Palestinian territories.

In this context, Egypt actively participated in regional and international forums and conferences in support of the Palestinian issue. It endorsed the peace initiatives aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian State. Moreover, it mediated to calm the situation between Israel and the resistance groups, sponsored the Palestinian-Palestinian dialogue to prevent divisions between the various Palestinian factions and provided all forms of support and relief to the Palestinian people.

Accordingly, this edition of the Policy Perspective series issued by the Cabinet's Information and Decision Support Center seeks to shed light on the Egyptian vision for resolving the issue of Israel's occupation of Palestine. It highlights the multi-faceted Egyptian moves in dealing with the conflict, the most prominent of which are using the Israeli massacres against civilians to restore momentum to the issue regionally and internationally and providing relief aid to the victims of those massacres. In addition, it examines Egypt's role as a mediator in prisoner exchange and ceasefire deals and in thwarting the forced displacement projects for Palestinians. It also addresses the Egyptian vision for settling the Palestinian issue.

# Egypt's Vision for Settling Israeli Occupation of Palestine

**Ambassador Ezzat Saad,**

Director of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs.



The Egyptian leadership always stresses that the Palestinian issue is the main issue of the Arab nation forever, confirming the Egyptian decision-maker's awareness of the centrality of this issue and Egypt's historical and responsible role towards it. No matter how many international and regional crises and how severe their developments are, this issue cannot be neglected or trivialized. There is no way to stability in the Middle East, and indeed the entire world, without a just, lasting, and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue, as the developments in the occupied Palestinian territories since October 7, 2023, have confirmed.

Undoubtedly, the Egyptian foreign policy concerning the Palestinian issue is influenced by the surrounding global and regional environment, especially in a region of many disturbances, conflicts, tensions, disputes, and overlapping issues, not to mention the interference of many regional and international powers. In fact, this issue intersects with Egypt's highest strategic interests, which require a high cost despite the limited capabilities, the development requirements, and the necessities of strengthening the National State's institutions as a way to activate the Egyptian State's role and status. This requires significant effectiveness, activity, and integrated tools. Here, it must be acknowledged that Egypt has borne the burden of the Palestinian issue and has made many sacrifices from the beginning of the conflict in 1948 until now.

Therefore, the Palestinian issue occupies the largest part of President Sisi's presidential diplomatic activity as one of the basic features of Egyptian foreign policy before and after Operation al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023. This event marks a new period in the Arab-Israeli conflict and a milestone in the history of the Palestinian people's struggle to achieve their national aspirations and establish an independent and sovereign state, under regional and international circumstances full of difficulties and challenges.

In this context, this article briefly addresses the dimensions of the multi-faceted Egyptian moves to deal with the conflict, its repercussions on the future of the Palestinian issue, and the Egyptian vision for the settlement, as follows:

### **First: The multi-faceted Egyptian moves to deal with the conflict**

In light of the peculiarities and complexities that characterize the regional and international scene, Egypt moved in several parallel paths:

#### **1- Using the Israeli massacres against unarmed civilians to restore the Palestinian issue to the regional and international agenda:**

By virtue of its involvement in the conflict from the beginning and its tireless attempts to push for a sound settlement, Egypt has repeatedly warned of a possible explosion of the situation in the occupied territories, the same as the previous Palestinian uprisings. Operation al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023, confirmed the sincere and real Egyptian vision. It also revealed what Egypt has always emphasized, which is not to be carried away by allegations of the waning priority of the Palestinian issue in light of normalization agreements between Israel and some countries in the region.

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In a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on October 7, Egypt drew attention to the serious dangers of the ongoing escalation between the Palestinian and Israeli sides following a series of attacks against Palestinian cities, which would negatively affect the future of truce efforts. It called for maximum self-restraint to avoid exposing civilians to further risks. It also called on the international actors involved in the efforts to resume the peace process to immediately intervene to stop this escalation and urge Israel to stop violations and provocative actions against the Palestinian people and adhere to the rules of international humanitarian law on the occupying power's responsibilities.

In addition, Cairo called for holding an international summit to discuss developments in the Palestinian issue. On October 21, Cairo Peace Summit 2023 was launched, with the participation of many kings, presidents, and heads of several international organizations. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi indicated, in his opening speech, that this summit is being held in a critical time that tests our humanity before our interests, the depth of our faith in the value of human beings and their right to life, and examines the principles that we claim to adopt. He said, "Egypt completely condemned targeting, killing, or terrorizing all peaceful civilians. Meanwhile, it was extremely astonishing that the world stands by and watches two and a half million Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip suffering a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. They faced collective punishment, siege, starvation, and intensive pressures for forced displacement. These practices were rejected by the civilized world that concluded agreements and established international law and international humanitarian law to criminalize them and prevent their recurrence." President El-Sisi, in his speech, denounced the "double standards" and the "inequality between human beings without distinction," referring to the wide gap between the international response to the Ukrainian crisis and the Palestinian issue and its people who have been in crisis since 1948. He affirmed that the solution to the Palestinian issue does not lie in displacement or pushing an entire people to other areas. Rather, the only solution is justice and to grant the Palestinians their legitimate rights to self-determination and to live in dignity and security on their land in an independent state like the rest of the world's peoples."



These words have been the main features of the Egyptian interventions in the extraordinary joint Arab-Islamic summit held in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, on November 11, 2023, and the extraordinary session of the Arab League Council at the level of Arab foreign ministers, held on October 11, 2023.

Moreover, Egypt held many meetings with officials of countries, governments, and international organizations with the aim of stopping the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

During the Security Council session on the ceasefire in Gaza, held on December 8, 2023, Egypt's permanent representative to the United Nations asserted that "for two months the Security Council has been unable to perform its duty in stopping the war, and unfortunately, obstructed and prevented the ceasefire, in a dangerous precedent that would inevitably affect, if not already affected, the UN's credibility in dealing with current and future crises."

Cairo also continued effectively coordinating with Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority.

***The Egyptian humanitarian support for Gaza reflects the Egyptians' firm conviction and sincere feeling of national responsibility to support the Palestinians. This conviction explains why all official and civil institutions actively moved to support the Palestinian people.***

## 2- Providing humanitarian aid to victims of the Israeli aggression:

Despite the difficult economic conditions facing the Egyptian economy, especially in light of the repercussions of the COVID-19 epidemic and the war in Ukraine, Egypt was keen on securing the continuous and safe flow of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing to alleviate the human suffering of the Palestinian brothers and confront the Israeli project to eliminate livelihoods in Gaza. The Egyptian humanitarian support for Gaza reflects the Egyptians' firm conviction and sincere feeling of national responsibility to support the Palestinians. This conviction explains why all official and civil institutions actively moved to provide all possible aid and supplies that will help the Palestinians confront all criminal forms of Israeli pressures. This conviction also prompted Egypt to ensure the permanent opening of the Rafah crossing to support the people of Gaza, taking into account the malicious Israeli goals and how to prevent them. On the other hand, organizing relief convoys and sending them to the crossing are welcomed by everyone, officially and popularly.

Egypt was also keen on providing all available forms of support to the Palestinian medical sector, which was bombed indiscriminately, destructed systematically, and became in need of unprecedented support. At the same time, Egypt received 1,210 injured and sick Gazans for treatment in Egyptian hospitals and in some brotherly and friendly countries, along with about 1,085 companions. Additionally, about 23,000 Palestinians, foreigners, and dual nationals, as well as 2,623 Egyptians stranded in Gaza, crossed the Rafah crossing.

A recent study conducted by the United Nations Development Program pointed out that the economic cost of the war in Gaza on Israel's neighboring Arab countries, namely Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, may rise to no less than USD 10 billion in 2023, pushing hundreds of thousands into poverty. The study also indicates losses may double if the war continues for another six months.

### 3- Egypt's role as a mediator in completing prisoner exchange deals:

In light of the complexities of achieving the goal of ending the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, Egypt sought in the early stages of the crisis to reach a humanitarian truce according to specific and agreed-upon conditions. This goal was actually achieved in the last week of November 2023 in cooperation with the State of Qatar. A total of 105 hostages from the Gaza Strip have been released in exchange for releasing 240 Palestinian detainees from Israeli prisons.

The official spokespersons for the Egyptian Presidency and the White House announced that the US President called his Egyptian counterpart on November 22, 2023, in which the former expressed his appreciation for the Egyptian role in the joint mediation that led to reaching a humanitarian truce. He praised the Egyptian efforts in enhancing regional security and stability and confirmed the United States' absolute rejection of the forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza to Egyptian territory "under any circumstances."

Furthermore, Egypt had presented an initial proposal for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip based on gradualness. It was based on implementing temporary humanitarian truces for short periods with a ceasefire, delivering massive aid, and concluding hostage exchange deals.

***Egyptian diplomacy has made and continues to make intensive efforts to thwart the forced displacement project, deeply rooted in Israel's imagination since the declaration of its state.***

#### 4- Thwarting the forced displacement projects for Palestinian people ... A new Egyptian red line:

Egyptian diplomacy has made and continues to make intensive efforts to thwart the forced displacement project, deeply rooted in Israel's imagination since the declaration of its state. For decades, Israel has tried to carry out its plan to displace Palestinians towards Egypt. In its ongoing aggression against Gaza, it has bet on the possibility of using the current crisis to impose this project by military force. It has already managed to push hundreds of thousands of residents to flee from the north of the Gaza Strip to its south. On the other hand, Egypt has frustrated this project and even succeeded in forming a strong international public opinion against it. Egypt's rejection of the displacement project was based not only on calculations related to protecting Egyptian national security but was a major condition for aborting the Israeli project to liquidate the Palestinian issue.

Not only did Egypt confirm its absolute rejection of forced displacement, but it also clearly warned the United States and Israel that the decision to send Palestinian refugees to Sinai as a result of the Israeli military operation in southern Gaza may lead to a "rupture" in relations between Egypt and Israel, as US and Israeli officials told Axios on December 7, 2023. Axios reported Egypt's assertion that the war in Gaza constitutes a threat to its national security. Egypt's Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, confirmed at the Aspen Forum in Washington on November 15, 2023, that the displacement of Palestinian civilians from Gaza to Egypt "is a war crime in itself. We have a strong will to reject any form of displacement of Palestinians."

Thus, the Egyptian attitude was to refuse creating a political, security, and military reality inside Gaza at the expense of Palestinian-Palestinian relations or the project of an independent Palestinian state, or at the expense of Egyptian national security. This prompted Egypt to set the controversy on the "next day" in Gaza, based on these three controls, as confirmed by Prime Minister Dr. Mostafa Madbouly before the Parliament last November.

## Second: Egypt's vision for the settlement

Egypt's senior officials, most notably the political leadership, have repeatedly stressed the necessity of implementing international legitimacy resolutions and establishing an independent Palestinian state on the borders of June 4, 1967. Egypt is constantly seeking to settle the conflict in a peaceful political way.

The Palestinian national reconciliation was, and still is, one of the challenges facing the Egyptian foreign policy strategy concerning the Palestinian issue from the beginning. Egypt believes that the Palestinians can significantly influence the course of their cause when they are united and have a common national project and unified leadership, thus preventing any attempt to marginalize their cause. This unity also strengthens their negotiating position internationally and increases the chances of Palestine to be a full member of the United Nations.

In light of Israel's attempts to undermine the two-state solution, separate the Gaza Strip from the West Bank, and perpetuate division among the Palestinian people, Egypt will have to make a double effort in sponsoring the Palestinian-Palestinian dialogue. It has played this role actively in repeated rounds since 2002 until now, especially since Hamas seized power in the Gaza Strip in June 2007.

For its part, Egypt refuses to talk about the next day, considering that the main urgent goal requires a ceasefire in Gaza at first and providing humanitarian aid to its residents continuously. It believes that talking about the next day should not be confined to Gaza, who will manage it, the future of Hamas, and other security matters, but it must include the entire Palestinian issue. The West Bank, East

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Jerusalem, and Gaza together constitute the Palestinian State that must be established and recognized by Israel and other countries that do not recognize it. In response to many proposals raised regarding the future of Gaza, under siege for 17 years, including the deployment of Arab forces to create stability, Western and Egyptian sources revealed that Egypt informed the United States of its absolute rejection of Israel's administration of the Gaza Strip. President Sisi repeatedly informed the Americans that Egypt saw no solution to the current conflict except the two-state solution and granting Palestinians their legitimate rights within their independent state. According to Israeli estimates, Egypt goes further and refuses remaining Israel in Gaza after the war and transferring the responsibility of managing it to regional and international powers for an indefinite period. In addition, Egypt completely rejects any Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip, whether as a complete occupation, establishing a security belt, or creating a buffer zone within the borders of Gaza. However, it rejects Hamas using the Gaza Strip as a "terrorist" base.

**In conclusion**, within the framework of Egypt's strategic objectives, top interests, and the principles and foundations of its foreign policy, especially in relation to supporting peace and stability regionally and internationally, it keenly emphasized that the Palestinian issue is the core of the conflict in the Middle East. If not settled, the region will have no security or stability. Egypt always adheres to the basics of mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, adherence to the principles of international law, respect for international covenants, and solidarity among countries.

In this context, Cairo supports all peaceful initiatives within the "two-state solution" in a way that restores the Palestinian people's full rights. It has adopted a comprehensive and intensive strategy to raise and revive awareness of the Palestinian issue, using all political and diplomatic tools, especially presidential diplomacy. These tools include affirming the constants, coordinating between the regional and international parties concerned, and taking the initiative regionally as a starting point for international action, with the aim of dealing with the roots of the conflict, not just managing it.









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