

What's Next for the Palestinian Diaspora After Gaza?

Introduction

On February 4, 2025, U.S. President Trump threatened to displace all surviving Palestinians in Gaza to neighboring Arab states, bulldoze the territory, and build a resort town in its place.¹ While his administration has since claimed these comments did not have any truth to them, they intensified an existing, often unspoken question: what's next for the Palestinians displaced from Gaza? With communities scattered and varied in their experiences and needs, immediate action and innovative approaches are necessary. With homes and hopes of justice dismantled, what does accountability look like for a stateless people?

The systemic destruction over the past 18 months has left those in Gaza facing immense uncertainty, raising urgent concerns about their future, particularly given the looming threat of forced movement to neighboring states and elsewhere.² With the international community split on accountability and regional leaders rejecting mass resettlement schemes, the crisis now demands not only humanitarian response but a rethinking of justice. This *Insight* explores the latest developments, the potential pathways forward for the Palestinian diaspora, and the deeper legal, political, and moral questions shaping what comes next.

Latest Developments: Ceasefire Collapse, Legal Cases, and Renewed Displacement Threats

The fragile ceasefire between Hamas and Israel collapsed on March 18, 2025, reigniting violence just days before Israel's budget vote.³ Israeli airstrikes escalated across Gaza,

killing over 400 people in a single night, while restrictions on aid deliveries tightened further.⁴ The renewed fighting has deepened the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, leaving hundreds of thousands without access to food, water, and medical aid and escalating displacement fears.

The timing of the attacks, just days before Israel's 2025 budget vote,⁵ raised questions about political motivations, with analysts pointing to Prime Minister Netanyahu's need to appease far-right coalition members ahead of the critical vote.⁶ Many observers have also noted that the attacks coincided with a dip in Netanyahu's approval ratings, suggesting the military escalation may serve domestic political ends as much as security goals.⁷ Meanwhile, international calls for restraint—including those from the UN and several EU states—have been largely ignored.⁸

Concurrently, legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ)⁹ and the International Criminal Court (ICC) have gained traction.¹⁰ The ICJ ruling issued on January 26, 2024, found a plausible case of genocide against Israel and ordered emergency measures to prevent further harm to Palestinians.¹¹ Meanwhile, the ICC's investigation into potential war crimes and crimes against humanity—including the forced displacement of civilians—has also advanced, with reports suggesting potential arrest warrants may be forthcoming. Legal experts say the outcome of these cases could reshape the landscape of international law, particularly regarding state accountability for collective punishment and forced transfer.¹² These cases underscore the broader legal and accountability dimensions of Palestinian displacement.

The legal developments come amid reports in March 2025 that the U.S. and Israel have approached governments in Sudan, Somalia, and Syria as potential locations for forcibly resettling Palestinians from Gaza,¹³ which was quickly and vehemently rejected by the African countries implicated.¹⁴ While the Trump administration has denied any formal policy of expulsion, these discussions raise severe legal and ethical concerns.¹⁵ Critics argue that even entertaining such proposals reinforces a colonial logic that treats Palestinians as a disposable population, to be moved for the convenience of more powerful states.¹⁶ The signals are clear: for Palestinians, the threat of permanent displacement looms large once again.

The Weight of Statelessness

Palestinians across the world have been forced to face the enduring and vicious aftermath of the Nakba in 1948,¹⁷ exacerbated by the 1967 War¹⁸ and ongoing Israeli settlements.¹⁹

For decades, those in exile have navigated uncertain legal statuses, limited rights, and scarce resources.

Today, Palestinians are one of the largest stateless populations²⁰ globally, confronting relentless instability. Individuals and communities in Gaza face urgent humanitarian crises, while Palestinians in host countries like Jordan and Lebanon endure vastly differing treatment. In Jordan—the home to over two million registered Palestinian refugees—the policies are relatively lenient: refugees enjoy some access to public services and mobility.²¹ Contrast this with Lebanon, where restrictive laws bar Palestinians from owning property, accessing jobs, and moving freely.²² Such disparities reveal a deeply fragmented regional response, insufficient for addressing the systemic injustices Palestinians endure daily.

Across Jordan, Lebanon, and beyond, refugees live in perpetual limbo—denied citizenship while unable to return home. Organizations like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) attempt to fill gaps in essential services, but ballooning refugee numbers and dwindling budgets mean basic needs frequently go unmet.

Repatriation & Resettlement

Under international law, particularly the 1951 Refugee Convention²³ and its 1967 Protocol,²⁴ forced expulsion is illegal. The ICJ's provisional measures also explicitly called on Israel to prevent acts that would bring “physical destruction” to the Palestinian people, which legal experts argue include forced displacement. Furthermore, the Rome Statute of the ICC defines “forcible transfer of population” as a war crime and crime against humanity, adding legal weight to concerns over resettlement proposals.²⁵

Historically, the international community's approach to the Palestinian diaspora has revolved around two principal solutions: [repatriation](#) (returning Palestinians to ancestral lands) and resettlement (integrating Palestinians into host states). Both have increasingly revealed themselves as [constrained, often unattainable solutions](#) that inadequately address the multifaceted realities faced by different Palestinian populations.

Repatriation, while legally recognized under [international law](#), remains politically obstructed by persistent Israeli resistance, rendering it effectively impossible in current geopolitical contexts. Meanwhile, resettlement faces significant pushback as neighboring Arab states have been consistently reluctant or simply unwilling to grant citizenship or

comprehensive rights to Palestinian refugees, in large part due to very legitimate political, economic, and social constraints.

The evidence of this impasse lies clearly in [prolonged refugee crises](#) across the region: Palestinians in Jordan have varying degrees of integration but limited political rights; those in Lebanon endure severe restrictions on employment, property ownership, and mobility; and displaced Gazans face acute humanitarian emergencies and prolonged instability.

A Broader Vision of Justice

The destruction in Gaza isn't simply about physical infrastructure or lives lost. In turn, justice cannot begin and end with prosecuting crimes committed during military operations, a goal that in itself may be difficult to achieve.²⁶

However, the ICJ and ICC proceedings signal a shift—they offer an opening for Palestinians to assert their legal rights on the world stage, even as political solutions remain elusive. Beyond criminal accountability, legal frameworks must evolve to provide long-term protections for Palestinians facing protracted displacement.

Real justice within resettlement frameworks—acknowledging that resettlement alone is rarely viewed as adequate justice by Palestinians—must incorporate psychosocial support, financial reparations, education, economic opportunities, legal protections, and cultural preservation. It must acknowledge the complex realities of diverse Palestinian populations and the inadequacies of traditional solutions.

Legal Rights: Regarding concrete changes, justice likely involves the protection of refugee rights in host countries, including in regard to legal status, mobility, and access to employment, education, and social services. It is further crucial to establish transnational platforms on which Palestinians can advocate for their own interests on a global stage, thus ensuring their voices are not sidelined domestically or internationally by the countries they reside in.²⁷

Cultural Identity: Any potential justice for those displaced from Gaza must address the symbolic and cultural dimensions of struggle: the right to their history, their narrative, and their identity. Reclaiming these elusive elements of heritage is as vital as reclaiming land. In turn, investments in education, cultural preservation, and community-led initiatives can

help Palestinians maintain their identity, even as political solutions remain elusive. Otherwise, forced resettlement and assimilation merely acts as a secondary genocide.²⁸

Education: For Palestinians who have lost their homes, communities, and sense of stability, education offers a critical pathway to rebuilding their lives. Degrees, certifications, and academic records may be lost or unrecognized, leaving many without a clear path forward. There must be deliberate efforts to create accessible education and professional reintegration programs. This may manifest as recognizing and accrediting displaced students' prior achievements, expanding scholarships, and investing in flexible, transnational education systems that allow Palestinians to continue their studies regardless of their location.²⁹

Psychosocial Support: The trauma of forced displacement, war, and prolonged statelessness has left deep scars on Palestinian communities. It is important not only to provide humanitarian aid addressing physical concerns, but to prioritize mental health services, community healing programs, and trauma-informed care as well. Without addressing the profound psychological toll of ongoing oppression, no justice framework can be truly complete. Grassroots initiatives, faith-based organizations, and international partnerships must work to provide accessible, culturally sensitive mental health resources to Palestinians worldwide.³⁰

Who Implements These Measures?

It is unclear who will provide these measures. Organizations such as UNRWA face uncertain futures; traditional international supports like the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offer little direct assistance, and regional states—Jordan and Egypt prominently—voice strong opposition to further integration efforts.

That being said, the current political realities demand a shift in focus—away from abstract, binary debates and toward concrete, immediate measures that empower the Palestinian diaspora to thrive in the present. Justice, ultimately, is not a static endpoint. It is an ongoing process that must adapt to changing realities without losing sight of its moral core. For the Palestinian diaspora, this means pursuing dignity, security, and agency now, while continuing to push for the structural transformations needed to make a full resolution possible in the future. Repatriation and resettlement may remain distant goals, but that doesn't mean justice must wait.

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