

The Trump Administration's First 100 Days: U.S.-Israel Relations

In its first 100 days, the Trump administration has made a number of decisions that impact U.S.-Israel relations. The U.S. has pressed for a new ceasefire and hostage release deal in Gaza and is diplomatically engaged in Lebanon while supporting Israeli military action against Hamas and Hezbollah, as well as in Syria. The Trump administration has also accelerated arms sales and transfers to Israel, and has not pushed back on settlement expansion or settler violence in the West Bank. Although Israel does not receive direct economic assistance from the U.S., regional cooperation and peacebuilding programs relevant to and involving Israel were almost entirely defunded as part of the global cuts to U.S. foreign aid. Differences between Netanyahu and Trump remain on Iran's nuclear program and tariffs, among other topics.

U.S.-Israel Relations

U.S. Aid

The sweeping cuts to U.S. foreign economic assistance have largely spared Israel, which receives mostly military aid. However, the administration cancelled all but one contract (amounting to ~\$96 million in obligated funds) under the [Middle East Partnership for Peace Act \(MEPPA\)](#), designed to disburse \$250 million over five years for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding. The administration also cut [Middle East Regional Cooperation Program](#) grants, which financed scientific cooperation between Israel and the Gulf states, totalling some \$36 million. Several cuts directly affected Israeli NGOs like [Hadassah](#) and [Tsofen](#), and at least \$19.5 million in obligated grant funds were cut from other peacebuilding projects and organizations that support [Israeli hospitals](#) and universities.

Arms Sales & Transfers

The Trump administration has increased arms sales to Israel, approving more than \$12 billion of armaments across at least a dozen sales, including 2000-pound bombs, JDAMs, Hellfire missiles, D9 armored bulldozers, and other systems. The administration also released two arms shipments that were previously held by the Biden administration over concerns about their use: a tranche of [2000-pound bombs](#) and [20,000 assault rifles](#) intended for use by the Israeli police. Three Joint Resolutions of Disapproval introduced by Senator Bernie Sanders and intended to block specific arms sales were [soundly defeated](#) in the Senate.

The U.S. has [surged arms deliveries](#) from existing sales to Israel, including the [delivery](#) of three F-35i "Adir" fighter jets this week. In early April, the U.S. [reportedly deployed](#) a second THAAD missile defense battery to Israel to handle ballistic missile threats, following a November deployment under the Biden administration.



West Bank Settlements

The U.S. has not objected to the recent [surge](#) in Israeli settlement approvals and outpost legalizations, or criticized settler violence and resulting [displacement](#) of Palestinians in Area C. The Trump administration has not formally rescinded then-Secretary of State Antony Blinken's February 2024 [declaration](#) that settlements are inconsistent with international law, itself a revocation of the first Trump administration's [break](#) with longstanding U.S. policy views on their legality. However, it is clear that the administration is not concerned by settlement expansion, and the new ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, is a longtime settlement advocate.

Office of the Security Coordinator (OSC)

In March, the Trump administration decided to [resume funding](#) for the [Office of the Security Coordinator \(OSC\)](#)—which leads training of the PA's security forces and facilitates Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation—after an initial freeze. However, as of late April, the administration is now reportedly considering [shutting down](#) OSC as part of a broader [State Department reorganization](#).

Sanctions

On his first day in office, Trump signed an EO [cancelling](#) the Biden-era [EO 14115](#) sanctions regime. This had nominally targeted both Israeli and Palestinian extremists in the West Bank, but in reality had been used almost entirely to target violent settlers, specific outposts, and settlement organizations like Amana. Four days later, the Treasury Department [removed](#) all sanctions designations established under EO 14115.

Gaza

The ceasefire in Gaza went into effect on January 19, just two days before the Trump administration took office, and the incoming president was widely credited with having created pressure on both sides to finalize the agreement. Since then, the administration has had an inconsistent approach to negotiations on a renewed ceasefire, with the president [repeatedly threatening](#) Hamas and negotiators holding [controversial direct meetings](#) with Hamas officials. The U.S. continues to work with other mediators to try to bridge the gaps between Israel and Hamas' positions on both tactical (ratio of hostages to prisoners, sequencing of releases, aid, etc.) and strategic (whether or not the war will end, post-war status of Hamas, IDF withdrawal, etc.) issues.

The Trump administration backed Israel's resumption of the war after March 18, and the president has repeatedly said that Israel should do whatever it needs to secure victory. After an April 25 phone call, however, Trump [said](#) he had asked Netanyahu to allow more aid into Gaza. During a February 5 [joint press appearance](#) with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Trump debuted a controversial "[Gaza Riviera](#)" idea that would have seen Gazans resettled to different countries while the U.S. redeveloped Gaza into a

modern high-tech and tourist hub. The administration quickly walked back some elements of the idea and indicated it wanted to see other actors, particularly Arab states, put forward fresh ideas for the future of Gaza. However, the U.S. and Israel have continued to explore [some options](#) for limited voluntary resettlement of Gazans, and Trump has repeatedly floated different iterations of the idea.

The Palestinian Authority

The Trump administration has thus far had very limited engagement with the Palestinian Authority, and gave only a [muted reaction](#) to the PA's February announcement of a reform to its martyr and prisoner payments program (also known as "pay-to-slay"). PA intelligence chief Majed al-Faraj's [trip to Washington](#) this week to meet with CIA officials represents the first significant high-level contact between the two governments.

Iran

There is clear disagreement between the U.S. and Israel over how to deal with Iran's nuclear program. The U.S. has conducted several rounds of direct talks with Iran over its nuclear program while continuing to sanction Iranian vessels, nationals, and businesses. The U.S. is [reportedly pressing](#) for an arrangement in which Iran can have a civilian nuclear program without uranium enrichment, while Iran [rejects](#) any deal that does not allow it to enrich. Israel views a deal, even if one materializes, to be insufficient to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. President Trump has oscillated between diplomacy and military threats, but has [stopped short](#) of supporting an Israeli strike or explicitly committing the U.S. to military action before diplomatic options are exhausted, but has said the U.S. [will lead](#) a strike if it occurs.

Lebanon

The Trump administration negotiated a roughly [three-week extension](#) of the IDF's post-ceasefire withdrawal from southern Lebanon, extending it to mid-February, and agreed for Israel to maintain five military outposts in strategic locations inside Lebanese territory. Since the November 2024 ceasefire, the U.S. has consistently backed Israeli strikes against Hezbollah targets and has [pressed](#) the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to move quickly to take over Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon. On March 5, the Trump administration [unfroze \\$95 million](#) of military aid to the LAF that the [Biden administration](#) had announced in January. On March 11, the U.S. [announced](#) that Lebanon and Israel would begin direct talks on demarcating their land border and Israeli withdrawal from its remaining outposts in Lebanon, following a 2022 [maritime border agreement](#).

Syria

Both American and Israeli policies on Syria are fluid, but a difference has emerged over Turkey's role there. The U.S. has said little about Israel's deployment in the previously Syrian-controlled section of the Golan Heights and U.N. buffer zone and its strikes on



Syrian military assets and sites, some of which were specifically to dissuade Turkey from taking control. In Netanyahu and Trump's White House meeting, however, Trump suggested U.S. mediation between Israel and Turkey in their dispute over the future of Syria. Meanwhile, the U.S. has begun drawing down its troop presence in Kurdish-controlled areas of eastern Syria and will make a decision about whether it will leave any personnel there in the coming months.

International Institutions

On February 4, the Trump administration [announced](#) that the U.S. would withdraw from the U.N. Human Rights Council and review its position in the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as bar any U.S. funding to UNRWA. On April 24, the Department of Justice, in a filing in a New York lawsuit, [reversed existing U.S. policy](#) and argued that UNRWA does not have immunity in U.S. courts and questioned the authority of the U.N. General Assembly to create an organization that operates as UNRWA does.

On February 6, Trump signed an EO [re-establishing sanctions](#) on the International Criminal Court, citing the court's actions against Israel as a central justification. The sanctions are aimed at anyone working for or aiding the court in targeting U.S. or allied country officials, military personnel, or nationals. Current ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan is the only person to have [been sanctioned](#) under this authority so far.

Tariffs

On April 2, the Trump administration [announced](#) a sweeping 10% global goods tariff as well as higher additional tariffs for specific countries, [calculated](#) on the basis of the size of each country's trade deficit with the U.S. Despite an Israeli effort to avoid U.S. tariffs by [preemptively cancelling](#) all remaining tariffs on U.S. goods, the U.S. levied a 17% [tariff](#) on Israel that the Manufacturing Association of Israel warned could [reduce exports](#) by \$2.3 billion and cost 18,000-26,000 jobs. Netanyahu was unable to get the tariffs lifted in an [April 8 meeting](#) with Trump.

The Trump administration [paused](#) most of the higher tariffs for 90 days, including Israel's, shortly after they went into effect, but the 10% tariff remains in place. [U.S.-Israel talks](#) to avoid the higher tariffs are expected to focus on [non-tariff trade barriers](#), such as Israeli non-acceptance of American technical and sanitary standards (as opposed to EU standards, which are recognized), localization requirements for U.S. companies, and opacity in Israeli laws surrounding imports, all of which inhibit market access for American firms.