

Trump gathers members of Board of Peace for first meeting, with some U.S. allies wary

Updated February 19, 2026 3:09 PM ET

By [Michele Kelemen](#) | [Aya Batrawy](#)



President Trump, flanked by Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, joins leaders for a group photo during the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace in Washington on Thursday. SAUL LOEB/AFP via Getty Images

President Trump convened the first meeting of the Board of Peace Thursday morning in Washington, D.C.

Trump created the group to oversee his ceasefire plan in Gaza, and announced Thursday that member states have pledged \$7 billion for reconstruction in Gaza. He also said the U.S. would contribute \$10 billion to the Board of Peace.

Representatives of more than 40 countries gathered at the U.S. Institute of Peace — a building that now bears Trump's name. In opening remarks, Trump credited his Secretary of State Marco Rubio for taking over the building.

The Board of Peace is chaired by Trump and the group was formally established last month.

Trump addressed a room full of heads of state and top diplomats. The meeting included dignitaries from countries including Argentina, Hungary, India, Pakistan and Vietnam. Meanwhile, other countries such as the United Kingdom, which have not joined the board out of concerns that Russia could be part of this new group, sent observers to the meeting.

Israel and Arab states are part of this board and they too had representatives at the meeting. There is no Palestinian representative on the board.

"This is the most prestigious board ever put together. You know, I've seen some great corporate boards. I've seen some great boards, period. It's peanuts compared to this board," Trump told the assembled dignitaries.

Some fear Trump's new organization could be used to undermine the United Nations. On Wednesday, a U.N. Security Council meeting on Gaza was moved up in order to accommodate diplomats being able to attend both meetings.

Trump acknowledged the possibility of a broader future role for the panel in his remarks Thursday.

"Someday I won't be here, the United Nations will be, I think, is going to be much stronger. The Board of Peace is going to almost be looking over the United Nations and making sure it runs properly," Trump said, adding that they will be working "very closely" with the U.N.

"But we're going to strengthen up the United Nations. We're going to make sure it's facilities are good. They need help, and they need help money wise. We're going to help them money wise. And we're going to make sure the United Nations is viable, and you have some very good people that the United Nations can do a good job," he said.

The Board of Peace meeting was convened as the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza that Trump pushed through last October remains fragile. Palestinian health officials say more than 600 people in Gaza have been killed in Israeli attacks since the ceasefire began, and the next steps of the plan are still unclear.

Trump acknowledged the attacks but said the war was effectively over.

"There are little flames," he said, noting that his ceasefire had succeeded in returning dozens of Israeli hostages who had been held by Hamas and other militants inside Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas launched an attack on Israel that killed more than 1,100 people.

Gaza is split in two at present. Israeli forces occupy more than half of the tiny territory, and the population lives in dire conditions in a sliver along the sea, where Hamas governs. Reconstruction funds would not go to the area where Palestinians are currently living but to areas under Israeli military control.

"Large parts of Gaza Strip are severely damaged, destroyed, actually, humanitarian needs are acute," Ali Shaath, the Palestinian who has been tapped to lead a committee of technocrats to administer Gaza under Board of Peace auspices, told the meeting.

A crucial part of the next phase of Trump's ceasefire plan will be the deployment of thousands of international troops to Gaza. This International Stabilization Force would not police the streets of Gaza, but would be more of a buffer between Israel and Hamas. Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, is among a handful of nations so far planning to send troops.

The U.S. Army officer appointed to command the International Stabilization Force, Maj. Gen. Jasper Jeffers, said the deployment would have 20,000 soldiers and 12,000 police officers.

Nickolay Mladenov, a Bulgarian diplomat and former U.N. Middle East envoy who is the newly appointed director-general for the Board of Peace in Gaza, has started to recruit Palestinian police officers for the territory and told the meeting that 2,000 people so far "have applied to join a new transitional Palestinian police force to be formed in Gaza."

The other key part of the Trump plan hinges on Hamas disarming. That is one of the demands by Israel, the U.S. and several Arab states, who don't want to pour money into Gaza without assurances Hamas no longer rules the territory, which they fear could lead to a resumption of the war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Hamas must not only give up heavy weapons like rockets and mortars but also small arms like Kalashnikov rifles, even though Israel is arming rival Palestinian militias that are fighting Hamas in Gaza.

And this week, Israel said Hamas has just 60 days to give up all its weapons or Israel would resume full-scale military operations, which would blow up Trump's ceasefire and resume a war that has left Gaza in ruins and killed more than 75,000 people, according to [a report](#) by the *Lancet*, the peer-reviewed medical journal.

Amid Thursday's talk of peace in Washington, the Middle East is bracing for a possible new war with Iran. President Trump said the Gaza ceasefire wouldn't have happened without the U.S. and Israel bombing Iran's nuclear sites last year.

"So now we may have to take it a step further," he said. "Or we may not. Maybe we are going to make a deal. You are going to be finding out probably over the next 10 days."

<https://www.npr.org/2026/02/19/nx-s1-5719053/trump-board-of-peace-meeting>