

UN Security Council Resolution 2803 and the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict

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[Amb. Alan Baker](#) - November 30, 2025

Introduction

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803 (2025), adopted on 17 November 2025, represents a serious attempt to restructure governance, security, and reconstruction mechanisms in the Gaza Strip. Presented alongside, and built upon, President Donald J. Trump's *Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict* of 29 September 2025, the resolution endorses a multilayered framework involving an unprecedented "Board of Peace" (BoP), an International Stabilization Force (ISF), and a transitional technocratic Palestinian administrative structure.

This paper analyzes the legal language and political implications of Res. 2803, focusing on the resolution's implicit and explicit legal authority, institutional innovations, conditional approach to future Palestinian self-determination, and its potential impact on Israel's security and regional stability.

1. The Resolution's Legal Character and Use of Chapter VII Elements

Although Res. 2803 does not explicitly invoke Chapter VII of the UN Charter, its wording adopts components associated with Chapter VII determinations. The operative clause stating that the situation in Gaza "threatens regional peace and security" reflects the terminology of Article 39, signaling that the Council perceives a possible threat to international peace.

However, by refraining from expressly stating that the resolution was adopted under Chapter VII, the Council avoids establishing binding enforcement measures. Key operative verbs—such as *endorses* and *calls on*—further demonstrate that the resolution's obligations are largely recommendatory rather than mandatory.

Legally, this carefully calibrated language creates a gray zone:

- It strengthens the political authority of the plan.
- It provides Security Council endorsement of it.
- Yet withholds the full coercive weight of Chapter VII

This ambiguity allows states to claim UN legitimacy for participation, while simultaneously preventing the Council and the UN itself from assuming direct responsibility for implementation or oversight.

2. Endorsement of the Comprehensive Plan: Scope and Limitations

The Council “endorses” the Comprehensive Plan rather than “adopting” it. This distinction is essential. Endorsement acknowledges the plan’s existence and supports its aims, but:

- It does not transform the plan into a UN instrument.
- It does not give the UN operational control over implementation.

The Comprehensive Plan is thus validated politically but not incorporated legally into the UN’s institutional architecture. The United States, in some form of loose coordination with Qatar, Egypt, and Turkey remains the principal diplomatic driver.

This distinction directly affects:

- the legal authority of the Board of Peace
- the status and obligations of UN agencies operating in Gaza
- the status of future political negotiations

3. The Board of Peace (BoP): A Novel International Governance Mechanism

The resolution welcomes the establishment of the Board of Peace, assigning it “international legal personality” – a term commonly associated with international organizations but undefined within the resolution itself.

Questions arise:

- Is the BoP envisioned as an independent international organization?
- What treaties or instruments grant it legal personality?
- What “relevant international legal principles” govern its operations?

The BoP is empowered to oversee:

- a transitional civil administration in Gaza
- reconstruction and economic initiatives
- coordination of humanitarian aid
- establishment of operational entities (including bodies with their own international legal personality)

Importantly, the BoP is not a UN body, nor does it operate under UN authority or financing. Its legitimacy stems solely from the political endorsement of the Security Council and the states participating in its creation.

3.1 Preconditions for Palestinian Self-Determination

The resolution has been widely misinterpreted—sometimes deliberately—as conferring implicit recognition of Palestinian statehood. In fact, it establishes rigorous, multi-layered preconditions, all subject to BoP assessment:

1. Completion of a Palestinian Authority reform program
2. Demonstration of secure and effective governance control over Gaza
3. Faithful implementation of reform measures
4. Advancement of Gaza redevelopment under international oversight

Only *after* these criteria are met may the BoP determine whether conditions exist for “a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood.”

The phrase “pathway” itself underscores that no predetermined or automatic outcome exists. The decision is discretionary and dependent on objective performance benchmarks.

4. Humanitarian Assistance and “Armed Groups”

The resolution underscores the requirement that humanitarian assistance be provided in cooperation with the BoP and relevant agencies, ensuring that aid is not diverted by “armed groups.” The UN’s longstanding institutional lexicon avoids labeling Hamas and the Islamic Jihad terror groups as “terrorist organizations,” instead using the curious and objectionable neutral term “armed groups.” This linguistic constraint remains unchanged, despite the resolution’s recognition that such groups have historically diverted aid and weaponized resources.

Though politically delicate, the terminology reveals structural limitations within the UN system and highlights the necessity for external oversight (BoP, ISF) to ensure the integrity of humanitarian operations.

5. Authorization of Participating States and Operational Entities

The resolution authorizes Member States to enter into arrangements and establish operational entities needed to implement the Comprehensive Plan. This authorization:

- bolsters the domestic political legitimacy for states wishing to participate
- signals a degree of UNSC backing that approaches—but does not fully reach—Chapter VII authority
- provides a quasi-legal framework for international involvement in what is effectively a non-UN mission

Notably, all operational entities are placed under BoP oversight, not UN oversight. Their funding relies entirely on donor contributions—not the UN budget—further distinguishing this structure from classic UN peace operations.

6. The International Stabilization Force (ISF)

Perhaps the most consequential component of the resolution is the authorization to establish a temporary International Stabilization Force in Gaza. The ISF is to operate:

- under *unified command*
- *acceptable to the BoP*
- in cooperation with Egypt and Israel
- but not under UN command

The ISF mandate includes:

- supporting demilitarization and destruction of terror infrastructure
- securing border areas with Israel and Egypt
- protecting civilians and humanitarian operations
- training vetted Palestinian police forces
- facilitating humanitarian corridors
- assisting the BoP in monitoring the ceasefire

6.1 Standards for IDF Withdrawal

The resolution provides that the Israel Defense Forces will withdraw as ISF control is established, according to:

- standards
- milestones
- timeframes

linked explicitly to demilitarization and agreed upon by Israel, the ISF, the guarantors, and the United States.

Critically, the resolution maintains that Israel may retain a security perimeter presence until Gaza is deemed “properly secure from any resurgent terror threat.” In practical terms, only Israel possesses the intelligence capabilities to assess the persistence or resurgence of such threats. For the ISF to succeed, its leadership and the BoP must recognize that Israel’s security assessments will be indispensable.

7. Duration and Reporting Requirements

The authorization for the BoP and ISF extends until 31 December 2027, subject to further Security Council action. The BoP is required to submit a progress report every six months.

This sunset clause provides:

- a built-in mechanism for political review
- opportunities for strategic adjustment
- an implicit warning that the Council expects measurable progress within a limited timeframe

8. Political and Legal Implications

8.1 For Israel

The resolution recognizes Israel's indispensable role in determining whether Gaza remains a terror threat. It also ensures that Israel is a mandatory partner in setting milestones for IDF withdrawal. However, the resolution's ambiguity regarding the sources of international legal authority for the BoP and ISF raises potential risks of diplomatic friction or misaligned expectations.

8.2 For the Palestinians

The resolution establishes a conditional, performance-based path toward political advancement. Unlike previous diplomatic frameworks, Palestinian statehood is explicitly linked to:

- governance reform
- demilitarization
- security stabilization
- economic redevelopment

These conditions, subject to monitoring by the BoP, may be perceived as externally imposed prerequisites.

8.3 For the International System

The creation of the BoP and ISF represents a hybrid governance model that diverges sharply from standard UN peace operations. The structure reflects:

- a growing trend toward multinational but non-UN-led interventions
- reliance on donor financing rather than UN budget support
- a shift toward political mandates managed outside traditional UN command structures

This model raises questions about accountability, legal oversight, and the long-term viability of extra-UN international governance bodies.

However, it acknowledges the fact that the UN in and of itself, due to its inherent deficiencies and politicization, cannot be relied upon to provide the framework for ascertaining a peaceful arrangement in Gaza.

Conclusion

UNSC Res. 2803 (2025) constitutes a highly unconventional and complex attempt to reshape governance, security, and reconstruction in Gaza. While it refrains from invoking Chapter VII authority, its language adopts elements of Chapter VII terminology, generating a degree of political—and arguably quasi-legal—weight behind the Comprehensive Plan.

The resolution introduces unprecedented institutional mechanisms—notably the Board of Peace and the International Stabilization Force—whose legal basis, powers, and long-term

sustainability remain ambiguous. Its approach to Palestinian statehood is conditional, incremental, and subject to multiple layers of external evaluation.

For Israel, the resolution provides essential safeguards by linking IDF withdrawal to verifiable demilitarization and by recognizing the need for ongoing Israeli security assessments. For the Palestinians, it presents an opportunity for renewed governance and reconstruction, albeit within a demanding framework, and without Hamas.

Ultimately, the success of Res. 2803 will depend upon the political will of its guarantors, the coherence of its newly created institutions, and the ability of all parties to navigate the legal ambiguities embedded within its structure.

FAQ

Is this resolution legally binding like a Chapter VII measure?

Not fully. It mirrors Chapter VII language by calling Gaza a threat to regional peace, but it avoids formally acting under Chapter VII and relies on soft verbs like “endorses” and “calls on.” That gives it major political force without clear coercive legal obligations.

What exactly is the “Board of Peace,” and who controls it?

It’s a new international body with “international legal personality” tasked with overseeing Gaza’s transitional governance, reconstruction, humanitarian coordination, and creation of related operational entities. It is not a UN organ, not UN-funded, and derives legitimacy from Security Council endorsement plus participating states.

Does the resolution recognize Palestinian statehood?

No. It creates a conditional pathway, not automatic recognition. Progress toward self-determination depends on meeting benchmarks such as Palestinian Authority reform, effective governance over Gaza, faithful implementation of reforms, and redevelopment under oversight—assessed at the Board’s discretion.

What is the International Stabilization Force supposed to do?

The force is a temporary, unified-command mission acceptable to the Board and coordinated with Israel and Egypt, but not under UN command. Its tasks include supporting demilitarization, destroying terror infrastructure, securing borders, protecting civilians and aid operations, training vetted Palestinian police, opening humanitarian corridors, and monitoring the ceasefire.

How does Israeli withdrawal from Gaza work under this framework?

Withdrawal is staged as the Stabilization Force takes over, based on demilitarization milestones, standards, and timeframes agreed among Israel, the force, the guarantors, and the United States. Israel may keep a security perimeter until Gaza is judged secure from renewed terror threats, implying Israeli threat assessments remain central.

Amb. Alan Baker

Amb. Alan Baker is Director of the Institute for Contemporary Affairs at the Jerusalem Center and the head of the Global Law Forum. He participated in the negotiation and drafting of the Oslo Accords with the Palestinians, as well as agreements and peace treaties with Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. He served as legal adviser and deputy director-general of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as Israel's ambassador to Canada.

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