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The Trump Administration Has a New Plan for Gaza

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The U.S. wants to build housing for those displaced by the war, but not everyone is on board.



Bashar Taleb / AFP / Getty

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Since last month's cease-fire, Gaza has been divided by a yellow line splitting Hamas-controlled Gaza to the west from Israeli-occupied Gaza to the east. At first, the line was invisible. But after Israeli soldiers repeatedly opened fire on Gazans who crossed it, Israel began to give the line a physical dimension with yellow concrete blocks. Now a U.S.-backed plan designed to house thousands of Palestinians on the Israeli side of the line could make the separation more prominent and, some fear, more permanent.

U.S. officials call the new developments Alternate Safe Communities. The initiative is designed to create communities of vetted Gazans, but it would separate them from those on the Hamas-controlled side of the yellow line, where the large majority of people in Gaza live, an official in Israel and a State Department official familiar with the planning told me.

Lieutenant General Patrick Frank—the military lead coordinating efforts to implement President Donald Trump’s peace plan—recently told colleagues that each settlement should include a medical center, a school, an administrative building, and “temporary housing for approximately 25,000 people,” according to an email I reviewed that has not been previously reported on. He emphasized the urgency of moving ahead with the plan, the email said. A senior Trump-administration official confirmed to me that at least one pilot Alternate Safe Community will be built. The first site being eyed for development, in the south of Gaza near Rafah, is very likely owned by Palestinians, as are the other potential sites, of which there are many. The senior administration official couldn’t immediately say if the United States knows who owns the property on which the pilot community will be built.