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EVALUATION NOTE

KIRYAT GAT OR TEL AVIV?

Kiryat Gat—known for its industrial-city identity and located in southern Israel, on the northern edge of the Negev Desert—is becoming a key hub for implementing the Gaza ceasefire by spearheading the second phase of the Trump Plan. In the city, a U.S.-led civil–military coordination center has begun hosting a multinational structure staffed by troops from the United States, the United Kingdom, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Operating out of a repurposed logistics complex, the center is staffed predominantly by U.S. personnel. At the facility’s entrance, the flags of Israel, the United States, Denmark, Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Jordan are flying; however, the absence of Turkish and Qatari flags reflects ongoing questions over the potential roles these two countries may play in Gaza’s post-war period. The center’s core mission is to remain deployed outside the Gaza Strip and coordinate the implementation of the ceasefire and the associated stabilization efforts.

Information on the command structure indicates that the center is led by U.S. officers. Israeli and U.S. personnel work on separate floors, with a shared coordination floor in between. Personnel from the United Kingdom, Jordan, the UAE, and various European countries also participate at different levels, reinforcing the mission’s multinational character. The facility is described not as an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) base, but rather as a civilian site that has been repurposed and reorganized for coordination purposes.

In recent days, senior U.S. officials have used the Kiryat Gat center as a platform to set out policy priorities and an incremental roadmap. U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance stressed that American troops would not enter Gaza, noting instead that external contributions could take the form of

¹<https://www.tepav.org.tr/en/ekibimiz/s/1472>

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financing, humanitarian assistance, or participation in a potential stabilization force. In parallel, Jared Kushner tied the reconstruction process to concrete security conditions, arguing that reconstruction would not advance in areas under Hamas control. According to the Israeli press, these statements position Kiryat Gat as the hub of a phased approach: first addressing hostages and missing persons, then establishing a stabilization mechanism, and only thereafter launching the reconstruction process.



Source: Times of Israel

On the other hand, the center's steady expansion has also reignited debates over how to preserve the balance between international involvement and Israeli autonomy. While the Israeli government presents it as a joint command center run together with the United States, the visible U.S. leadership and the presence of troops from allied countries have placed the site at the heart of the broader debate over how the ceasefire will be sustained and how Gaza's post-war future will be shaped. Some commentators have even begun to describe Kiryat Gat as a "new capital" within the existing political-security architecture. Responding to such characterizations, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu underscored that the facility is "simply a joint command center operated together with the United States." He also stated that Israel "does not seek anyone's approval for its actions in Gaza" and that it "will not allow Turkish troops to be deployed there."

There is also growing talk that the city is undergoing a rapid and highly visible transformation as the U.S. presence reshapes everyday life. Local authorities view the foreign military presence not only as a security measure, but also as a development that brings new economic and civic opportunities to the city. Uniformed U.S. soldiers have become a common sight in Kiryat Gat's shopping malls, while cafés, restaurants, and delivery services operate around the clock to meet rising demand. Mayor Kfir Swisa described this as "a development that has put Kiryat Gat on the map." In parallel, a major housing project comprising 21,000 apartments is

being implemented in the Carmei Gat area. Some residents, however, are uneasy about the city's growing strategic profile and its unexpected shift from a "sleepy" town into a bustling hub.

In sum, Kiryat Gat is a tangible indicator that preparations are underway for a new phase in Gaza under Trump's 20-point Gaza Peace Plan. According to recent reports, the United States has circulated a draft resolution to members of the UN Security Council proposing the establishment of an international security force in Gaza for at least two years. Yet in practice, that framework appears to be operating *de facto* in Kiryat Gat already. This, in turn, is a reminder that the Trump plan needs to be reassessed. It seems the plan will not be designed in Washington and then simply rolled out from there. Even if Netanyahu insists that this is an area under Israeli control, the civil–military structure established by CENTCOM could just as plausibly be described as a U.S. base.

Another question is this: if the ceasefire is successfully implemented, what will Kiryat Gat's future be? Will it remain a U.S. base—one that could potentially make the peace process more politically contentious—or, now that this industrial city has been revitalized and the "sleepy town" has awakened, will it evolve into a hub that contributes to the region's economic renewal, industry, and employment, in line with the special economic zone idea set out in Article 11 of Trump's peace plan?