Humanitarian city in Gaza is a moral, strategic imperative

written by Dr. Adi Schwartz | 26.07.2025

As the war in Gaza continues, the imperative to dismantle a ruthless terror organization, while protecting unarmed civilians, has never been clearer.

One bold and practical solution that deserves urgent international endorsement is the creation of a humanitarian city in southern Gaza – a secure, demilitarized zone where Palestinian civilians can seek refuge and access life-saving aid.

This is not a public relations maneuver. It is a concrete plan rooted in both historical precedent and moral clarity. In every major conflict, from Ukraine to Syria, noncombatants have been granted the option to escape active war zones.

Just imagine the international outcry if Poland or Hungary had refused to allow Ukrainians to flee combat zones into their territory.

Yet when Israel seeks to offer Palestinians the opportunity to access aid in a secure area, it is inexplicably met with skepticism and resistance. Why should Gaza be the exception?

The humanitarian city would be located in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. Based on global refugee camp standards, the site could house hundreds of thousands of civilians, if not more, shielded from Hamas strongholds and the heart of combat.

Entry would be strictly limited to unarmed, noncombatant civilians, ensuring the area remains neutral and safe. International aid agencies would provide services, while Israeli forces ensure the zone remains demilitarized. Egypt and other Arab states could also play a constructive logistical role.

Critics might argue that this proposal amounts to forced displacement. That is false. No one would be compelled to relocate, but civilians deserve a real choice – to remain amid crossfire and Hamas exploitation or to move temporarily to a secure area with access to food, water, shelter, and medical care. That is not displacement; it is protection.

By isolating civilians from the battlefield, Israel can operate more effectively and with fewer casualties on all sides. The faster Hamas is defeated, the sooner the war ends.

In addition, this initiative upholds the principle of distinction under international law and counters baseless accusations of war crimes. It demonstrates Israel’s commitment to international legal standards, even in the face of an enemy that deliberately embeds itself among civilians.

Beyond protecting innocent Gazans, a humanitarian city could weaken Hamas’s

control over the population. Nearly two years into the war, the terror group remains mainly responsible for distributing humanitarian aid.
Hamas's civilian government ministries still operate, while Hamas-controlled "emergency committees" keep order in municipalities. In September 2024, the Hamas Health Ministry coordinated a polio vaccination campaign with the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund.
Hamas will continue governing the enclave unless its governance capabilities are taken away.
Critics of the plan have significantly misrepresented international law to portray the humanitarian city as monstrous. In truth, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols require that states take "constant care" to protect civilians from harm, including relocating them from the battlefield.
Gaza has been under various levels of siege since October 9, 2023. The laws of siege call for the evacuation of civilians from besieged areas. Besides protecting noncombatants, international law allows the relocation of civilians if a military necessity demands it.

Establishing humanitarian safe zone is far from a war crime

Far from being a "war crime," the United Nations High Commission for Refugees itself advocates for the creation of "humanitarian safe zones" in certain situations. These "safe zones" provide refugees with legal status, prevent exploitation, and allow the orderly and equitable distribution of aid and resources.

The only party that stands to lose from the creation of such a humanitarian city is Hamas, as it would make it far more difficult for the terror army to use civilians as human shields.
It is no secret that Hamas intentionally embeds itself in hospitals, schools, and mosques. The terror group opposes reducing the Gazan civilian death toll as it would lose one of its primary propaganda points against Israel. That alone is a compelling reason to support this initiative.
Shrill rhetoric and pseudo-legal claims are at risk of scuttling a plan that has the potential to both significantly improve the welfare of ordinary Gazans and to hasten the downfall of the Hamas regime. Israel and its allies must stand the course, despite the hysteria. Civilians must be protected and Hamas defeated.
The article was written together with Avraham Russell Shalev.

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