

"Philadelphi Corridor: The Critical Strip Shaping Gaza's Future Amid Tensions and Negotiations"

The Philadelphi Corridor, running along the Gaza-Egypt border, is a focal point of intense debate. It plays a critical role as a vital conduit for essential supplies and materials into Gaza, acting both as an air bridge for resupply and a checkpoint for movement in and out of the territory. During the Swords of Iron War, Israel's control of this corridor has been viewed by the Western world as worsening the isolation of Gazans, who are already displaced for their safety.

The corridor's significance is underscored¹ by its' role in transporting essential supplies, including food and weapons. Currently controlled by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), its management raises concerns about its effects on aid from Iran and Iraq and its role in smuggling. "That control is critical ... some areas are wide enough for trucks, which have been used to smuggle weapons and personnel into Gaza."² This corridor can significantly impact the humanitarian situation and potentially cause chaos if used for smuggling. If controlled by Hamas, it remains a persistent issue for Israel.

Hamas, elected to the Palestinian Parliament in 2006, has clashed with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA), which both support a two-state solution that Hamas opposes. The corridor's control limits Hamas' access to weapons and supplies from Egypt, giving Israel

¹ Ben Menachem, Yoni. "Securing the "Philadelphi Corridor": A Strategic Imperative for Israel." *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* 28 December 2023: 1.

² Anonymous. "The Importance of Gaza's Philadelphi Corridor." *Baltimore Jewish Times* 7 June 2024: 1.

leverage to weaken Hamas and influence negotiations. However, the Western world disapproves of this control and is urging Israeli leaders and the IDF to withdraw military personnel before finalizing a deal.

Egypt has cautioned Israel against taking actions that could drive Gazans to cross the border or jeopardise the significant peace agreement between the two nations established in 1979³. In response, Israel plans to relinquish partial control of the corridor as part of a hostage deal with Hamas, aiming to preserve its alliance with Egypt. This move alleviates pressure on Prime Minister Netanyahu and shifts responsibility to Hamas leaders like Yahya Sinwar. By agreeing to the terms set out by the US, Israel disrupts Hamas's supply chain and affects Western perceptions of the situation.

Recently, the US has been facilitating talks for a ceasefire and hostage return, focusing on "how to advance hostage negotiations"⁴. Netanyahu has indicated that the IDF will stay within the corridor⁵. The US supports the IDF's strategic aims due to its alliance with Israel, but maintaining control of the corridor does not help in retrieving hostages. Despite public pressure for a quick resolution, Israel views the corridor as vital for strategy and negotiations, rejecting a full military withdrawal. Prominent figures like Antony Blinken advocate for a swift resolution to ensure safety. As of August 24th 2024, President Biden and Prime Minister

³ Bigg, Matthew Mpoke. "What Is the Philadelphi Corridor, and Why Does It Matter?" *New York Times (Online)* 30 May 2024: 1-3.

⁴ Lazaroff, Tovah and Eve Young. "Netanyahu: Israel won't pay ant price for hostage deal, won't give up Philadelphi." *The Jerusalem Post* 20 August 2024: 1.

⁵ Lazaroff, Tovah. "Israel firm on holding onto Philadelphi Corridor after Netanyahu-Blinken meeting." *The Jerusalem Post* 19 August 2024: 1.

Netanyahu have reached an agreement on the corridor. Despite differing views, they have informally agreed to a military withdrawal as per request from Egypt and Hamas⁶.

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⁶ The Times of Israel . “Report: Egypt rejected Israeli offer to build 8 watchtowers along Philadelphi Corridor on Gaza’s southern border.” *The Times of Israel* 24 August 2024: 1.