

“Green Rafah”: Israel’s Plan to Isolate Palestinians and Cement Its Hold on Gaza



For the past two years of its war on Gaza, Israel has consistently invoked the name of Rafah a city in the southern Gaza Strip in both military and political discourse. Sometimes it is labeled a Hamas stronghold, other times it is cited in relation to alleged cross-border tunnels into Egypt, or referenced for its strategic geographic location.

But in late November 2025, Rafah reemerged in Israeli media coverage, this time in the context of a proposed isolated housing project with a carefully chosen, seemingly benign name: “Green Rafah.” Behind the euphemism, however, lies a scheme with distinct political and military objectives.

This development has prompted pressing questions: What is the nature of this project? What are Israel’s goals? Who is being targeted? And how might this plan affect the lives and movement of Palestinians in Gaza? This report seeks to explore those issues.

Key Details

Who is behind the project?

The brainchild of Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer—a close ally of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—“Green Rafah” was conceived shortly before Dermer’s resignation in November 2025, according to i24NEWS Knesset correspondent Amiel Yerhi. During a cabinet meeting, Dermer reportedly stated that if Hamas would not disarm voluntarily, Israel would “build a new Gaza on the Israeli side and re-educate its people.”

Why the name?

The name “Green Rafah” is a calculated attempt to mask military intentions under a humanitarian and environmental veneer, making the project easier to promote internationally. At first glance, the term evokes natural imagery life, growth, and sustainability serving as a linguistic counterweight to the widespread destruction left by the war. It is a far more marketable label than its operational reality: a “military buffer zone.”

Why now?

The proposal emerges at a pivotal moment just before the anticipated second phase of a ceasefire agreement. That phase includes a full Israeli withdrawal from the “yellow line” zone, reopening of border crossings, unrestricted delivery of aid, the establishment of an internationally overseen transitional civil authority in Gaza, and deployment of a multinational stabilization force to replace Israeli troops.

Israel is seeking to obstruct this transition and consolidate its control over more than half of Gaza’s territory.

Who is the project targeting?

According to i24NEWS, “Green Rafah” would house civilians from Gaza who are not affiliated with Hamas or other resistance factions. Entry would be contingent upon security clearance, effectively branding the project as a safe haven for Palestinians who accept Israel’s conditions and reject Hamas’ authority.

Location and Boundaries

The proposed site lies east of Rafah, along the 14-kilometer Philadelphi Corridor on the Egypt-Gaza border. The project would occupy a 100-meter-wide strip within the so-called “yellow line” area, which constitutes 53% of Gaza’s territory and remains under Israeli military control as per the temporary ceasefire map.

Israel’s Objectives

Israel’s strategic goals for the project fall into three main categories:

Security: To entrench permanent control over the Philadelphi Corridor by

creating a southern security buffer that cuts Gaza off from Egypt and blocks arms smuggling or resistance activity.

Political: To gradually shift Palestinian loyalties by creating a model enclave offering “ideal” living conditions an implicit incentive to abandon resistance.

Strategic: To maintain the geographic and political separation between Gaza and the West Bank, thereby preventing the establishment of a unified Palestinian state.

Governance and Control

Although the original American plan envisions a multinational stabilization force overseeing Gaza’s “safe zone,” Israel vehemently opposes the presence of any international troops or the handover of administrative authority to a Palestinian civil body at this stage.

No local or international entity has so far expressed willingness to administer “Green Rafah.” For now, Israeli forces remain in full control of the proposed zone, overseeing all groundwork and construction efforts.

Implications for Gaza’s Residents

According to aid workers, diplomats, and analysts cited by Reuters and The Guardian, the project carries severe ramifications:

It constitutes a form of forced resettlement within occupied territory, with far-reaching demographic and humanitarian consequences.

It may turn eastern Rafah into an isolated enclave within Gaza, with tightly controlled access subject to Israeli military procedures.

It formalizes a new reality where Gaza is carved into zones: some “conditionally livable,” others devastated and uninhabitable.

The sharp contrast in conditions could compel thousands of Palestinians to relocate in search of minimal security and services.

It may serve as the first step toward redrawing Gaza’s population map emptying certain areas and concentrating residents elsewhere.

There are growing concerns that displaced Rafah residents will be permanently barred from returning to their original neighborhoods.

The project raises fears that humanitarian aid will be weaponized as a tool for military and security control conditional on compliance.

Construction Status

Israeli media outlets including Channel 15, Kan News, and Yedioth Ahronoth have reported increasing American pressure on Israel to prepare for the next

phase of the Trump-era regional plan, especially after the release of all living Israeli hostages, with only two bodies remaining out of the original 28.

Israeli forces have begun clearing rubble and moving heavy engineering equipment into eastern Rafah, with construction expected to begin in early December 2025. Initial efforts are focused on preparing an uninhabited, war-cleared area for the establishment of the buffer zone.

Post-Implementation Scenarios

If the project moves forward, several possible outcomes have been identified:

Scenario One: “Green Rafah” becomes a permanent buffer zone under direct Israeli military administration—similar to Israel’s occupation of southern Lebanon before 2000. Success hinges on the army’s ability to prevent long-term security breaches, something Israeli analysts warn would be costly and complex in Gaza’s environment.

Scenario Two: The model is expanded to other areas of Gaza, creating a network of “ Hamas-free zones ” while keeping the rest of the Strip under blockade. The Washington Post notes this approach aligns with US ideas of “selective reconstruction.”

Scenario Three: The project stalls or partially collapses due to local resistance, international pressure, or the high financial and humanitarian costs. Notably, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant proposed a similar idea in July 2025 to build a new city atop the ruins of Rafah, but Netanyahu reportedly demanded a “cheaper, faster plan.” Yedioth Ahronoth reported at the time that the cost of such a project could range from \$2.7 to \$4 billion.