# Netanyahu’s arming of Gaza clans risks igniting wider chaos and humanitarian crisis



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s announcement of arming certain Palestinian clans in Gaza represents yet another reckless escalation rooted in flawed security policies that threaten to deepen chaos rather than restore stability. The government’s decision to supply weapons to these groups, supposedly to combat Hamas, ignores the long-term danger of empowering criminal factions with dubious loyalties and a history of looting humanitarian aid, undermining any genuine effort to establish peace or order in the region.

In a disturbingly cavalier social media statement, Netanyahu insisted that arming clans opposed to Hamas was “on the advice of security officials,” claiming it would “save the lives of Israeli soldiers.” But this shortsighted rhetoric masks a perilous gamble that risks legitimising violence and amplifying local conflicts — tactics reminiscent of failed strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan that only prolonged instability under the guise of security. Such reckless policies threaten to turn Gaza into a powder keg of clan rivalries, further destabilising the region and placing innocent civilians at even greater risk.

Critics across the political spectrum have condemned this move, warning that it amounts to arming armed gangs whose allegiances are ambiguous at best. Netanyahu’s allies may justify these actions as necessary, but they are fundamentally short-sighted, with opposition voices rightly fearing that such an approach will backfire, escalating violence and ultimately undermining Israel’s security. The decision to facilitate criminal groups' involvement—some reportedly with links to jihadist organisations—raises serious questions about the legitimacy of Israel’s broader strategy, especially when it risks turning Gaza into a lawless, uncontrollable mess.

Furthermore, the relationships between these clans and Israeli forces have ignited outrage within Gaza itself. Yasser Abu Shabab’s family publicly disowned him after he was implicated in collaborating with Israeli troops, highlighting the societal fractures and the peril of legitimising collaboration with armed factions. Humanitarian agencies have also voiced alarm, with reports that aid delivery is being systematically looted by gangs operating under Israeli oversight—an outcome that exacerbates the suffering of Gaza’s already devastated civilian population.

The human toll continues to mount, with over 54,000 casualties since Hamas's attack in October 2023, and children suffering from severe malnutrition amid collapsing healthcare services. Israel’s current military tactics, combined with internal political chaos, threaten to deepen the humanitarian catastrophe. The instability is further compounded by the internal divisions within Israel’s ruling coalition, as factions like the ultra-Orthodox Shas party threaten to bring down the government over stalled attempts to exempt their community from military service—distractions that undermine any coherent strategy and weaken Israel’s position in an already complex crisis.

By turning to local clans as a means of governance, the Israeli government risks recreating a precedent of colonial-style reliance on fragmented local power structures, much like the disastrous efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Such an approach is unlikely to foster stability but rather to entrench clan rivalries, inviting further chaos and prolonging the suffering of ordinary Palestinians. Without a clear and principled framework guiding this risky policy, it’s evident that Israel’s strategy is more about quick fixes than genuine long-term solutions, leaving the region on a perilous path to further destabilisation.

As the conflict continues to spiral out of control, it is crucial to question the wisdom of arming factions that could become future enemies. The dangerous combination of military brinkmanship, internal political discord, and societal upheaval signals that the region’s descent into further turmoil is imminent unless a fundamentally different and responsible approach is adopted—one rooted in diplomacy, accountability, and respect for human rights, not reckless escalation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/06/netanyahu-defends-arming-palestinian-clans-accused-of-ties-with-jihadist-groups> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/8f2461f5253550d0a4ce4ea661c580ef> - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed that Israel has 'activated' certain Palestinian clans in Gaza opposed to Hamas. This marks the first public acknowledgment of Israeli cooperation with armed Palestinian groups. One such group is the Popular Forces, led by Yasser Abu Shabab in Rafah, which has claimed to protect Israeli-backed food distribution centers but has also been accused of looting aid shipments. Netanyahu cited security advisors and claimed the move was to protect Israeli soldiers, though no specific details were given about the support provided to these clans. The Abu Shabab group insists its role is purely humanitarian and denies receiving external support, though aid workers and local sources report attacks on aid convoys and looting. The United Nations has expressed concern about criminal gangs looting aid under Israeli oversight. The broader conflict began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas militants attacked southern Israel, sparking a war that has devastated Gaza, killed over 54,000 Palestinians, and displaced nearly the entire population, exacerbating a severe humanitarian crisis.
3. <https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/06/05/israel-proporciona-armas-a-una-banda-en-gaza-para-enfrentarse-a-hamas-cadena-ser/> - El Gobierno de Israel ha confirmado que está proporcionando armas al grupo Abu Shabab en la Franja de Gaza, con el objetivo de debilitar al movimiento islamista Hamás. Esta banda, originada en Rafah y con antecedentes en el saqueo de ayuda humanitaria, ha emergido como un rival directo de Hamás y ha protagonizado enfrentamientos armados con sus miembros. El primer ministro Benjamin Netanyahu ha defendido esta medida como una estrategia para salvar vidas de soldados israelíes y combatir al grupo terrorista, si bien la decisión se habría tomado sin la aprobación del gabinete de seguridad. Avigdor Lieberman, exministro de Defensa y líder opositor, criticó duramente la iniciativa, calificando a Abu Shabab como una organización criminal vinculada al Estado Islámico. Fuentes de defensa confirmaron la entrega de armamento, incluyendo rifles Kalashnikov incautados a Hamás. El grupo aparece en vídeos uniformado y bajo el emblema de “mecanismo antiterrorista”. La medida genera controversia por el secretismo del proceso y sus posibles implicaciones regionales.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/9705ecaf-4191-4d77-9ec9-4549cf6144ba> - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed that Israel is arming clans in Gaza that oppose Hamas, aiming to weaken the group's control. His acknowledgment followed criticism from Avigdor Lieberman, a political opponent, who warned that this strategy could backfire. The initiative reportedly began early in the conflict following Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack. Hamas condemned the move, accusing Israel of fostering chaos by supporting criminal gangs. One such group, led by Yasser Abu Shabab, has been active in Rafah and is seen by some as working with Israeli forces, despite their public denial. These militias are controversial, with observers questioning their legitimacy and the clarity of their roles. Efforts to undermine Hamas through alternative leadership have seen limited success, as collaborators face social stigma and targeted violence. Meanwhile, Israel is constructing Hamas-free zones in southern Gaza, including a new aid distribution system bypassing traditional humanitarian channels. The UN and aid organizations criticize this system, citing the dangers to civilians and accusing Israel of using aid as a tool of control.
5. <https://warontherocks.com/2024/05/the-inevitable-role-of-clans-in-post-conflict-stabilization-in-gaza/> - Israel has not officially declared this a policy. And it is not entirely clear how the clans would fulfill their designated function: Will there be a council of clan and village leaders to run Gaza’s affairs, or will each of the leading clans gain control over a territory? The Israeli government has not presented a blueprint for involving the clans. Still, even before this policy has materialized, it had attracted fierce criticism. Some of the critiques of this strategy have warned that the clans (colloquially called hamulas) are “a thing of the past.” These critics argue that ever since the first intifada, Palestinians have broken away from this kinship structure. Others have pointed to Israel’s past attempts to establish a system of civilian governance in the West Bank based on local clans. The Village Leagues, as this system was named, failed to achieve its goals and dissolved ahead of the breakout of the first intifada. A more radical perspective has depicted this plan as essentially colonial, seeking to “divide Gaza into emirates ruled by local tribes” in the same way that colonial regimes had done in the past. Finally, observers have highlighted clan involvement in illicit economic activities, including smuggling and human trafficking. Therefore, they have warned that affording clans a role in post-conflict Gaza risks deepening competition and rivalry between them and resulting in intensified criminal violence and warlordism.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Criminal_Court_arrest_warrants_for_Israeli_leaders> - On 21 November 2024, following an investigation of war crimes and crimes against humanity, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for two senior Israeli officials, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, and Yoav Gallant, the former Minister of Defense of Israel, alleging responsibility for the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts during the Gaza war. The warrant against Netanyahu is the first against the leader of a Western-backed democratic country for war crimes. 125 ICC member states are now required to arrest Netanyahu and Gallant if they enter their territory, including France and the United Kingdom. The ICC also issued an arrest warrant for Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike on 13 July 2024 but whose death remained unconfirmed at the time. (The ICC noted that it was unable to determine whether Deif had been killed, and was therefore issuing the warrant for his arrest. The ICC did not issue arrest warrants against two other Hamas leaders, Yahya Sinwar and Ismail Haniya, as their deaths had been confirmed.)
7. <https://worldisraelnews.com/israeli-defense-chiefs-want-palestinian-clans-to-govern-gaza-after-war/> - Israeli defense officials are contemplating allowing manage the temporary governance of the Gaza Strip by local Palestinian clans in the aftermath of their military campaign against Hamas. The plan, which is being proposed by the IDF and the Shin Bet security service, is aimed at stabilizing the region until a more enduring solution is established and mirrors a similar tactic used by the US in Iraq and Afghanistan after the topple of those regimes. It would see Gaza divided into several zones that would each be overseen by a specific Palestinian clan, responsible for administering humanitarian aid and managing local resources including water and food. This system is designed to ensure that assistance reaches the affected areas efficiently, with only those clans recognized and vetted by Israeli security authorities being eligible to participate. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has has made it clear that the Palestinian Authority is not a viable option to govern Gaza under its current leadership, despite the U.S. advocating for such. The idea of local clan governance in Gaza has drawn criticism and is not likely to gain acceptance among Palestinians. It will also be very challenging for Israel’s defense establishment to ensure clan members have no connections to Hamas.