

The Karabakh “Overtone” in the context of the Resolution for the Palestinian-Israeli Case ARVAK Center comment, 12.02.2025¹

In February 2025, during a press conference following talks with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, U.S. president Donald Trump proposed taking the Palestinian enclave of Gaza under American control in the form of “*long-term ownership*”. According to the American president, Gaza should be transformed into the “*Middle Eastern Riviera*”, with the majority of Palestinians relocated to neighboring countries and their land developed into a high-class resort area. In this way, according to Trump, the perennial Palestinian-Israeli conflict will be successfully resolved².

After the press conference in Washington, political and expert circles tended to categorize the U.S. president's words as yet another set of “*populist fabrications*” lacking rational basis and programmatic content. However, it soon became clear that the idea of the “*Middle Eastern Riviera*” had already been incorporated into the U.S. foreign policy agenda and was being actively discussed.

On February 5, 2025, U.S. secretary of defense Pete Hegseth confirmed that the Pentagon was seriously considering Trump's “*creative idea*” of effectively occupying Palestinian territories with American troops³. On February 6, 2025, U.S. secretary of state Marco Rubio noted that the president's proposal should be treated with great seriousness and characterized it as a “*magnanimous step*”⁴. Positive feedback from Israeli leaders on Trump's proposals also indicates that the U.S. has a plan for the transfer of Palestinians, with the details of the plan likely to be worked out by Americans and Israelis⁵. This is indirectly evidenced by the almost simultaneous withdrawal of the U.S. and Israel from the UN Human Rights Council⁶. This move should be seen as these countries stepping away from their legal and moral obligations in anticipation of planned actions in Gaza, which fundamentally contradict the letter and spirit of international law. In this context, it is also worth recalling Israel's boycott of the UN in June 2024 in response to the organization's attempts to stop the bloodshed in Gaza.

Thus, it becomes clear that D. Trump is determined to take radical measures to finally resolve the Palestinian issue through the forced relocation of Gaza's 3 million inhabitants.

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 11.01.2025.

² “Trump intended to ‘take control’ of the Gaza Strip and expel the Palestinians from there. He did not rule out sending American troops to Gaza”. Meduza (in Rus.), 06.02.2025, [https://meduza.io/feature/2025/02/05/tramp-sobralysya-vzyat-pod-kontrol-sektor-gaza-i-vyselit-ottuda-palestintsev-on-ne-isklyuchil-otpravki-v-gazu-amerikanskih-voysk/](https://meduza.io/feature/2025/02/05/trump-sobralysya-vzyat-pod-kontrol-sektor-gaza-i-vyselit-ottuda-palestintsev-on-ne-isklyuchil-otpravki-v-gazu-amerikanskih-voysk/) (download date: 06.02.2025).

³ “The U.S. Secretary of Defense: Trump is ready to think outside the box regarding Gaza”. Anadolu Ajansi (in Rus.), 06.02.2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/мир/глава-пентагона-трамп-готов-мыслить-нестандартно-в-отношении-газы-/3473401/> (download date: 06.02.2025).

⁴ “Secretary of State Rubio: The U.S. is ready to play a leading role in the reconstruction of Gaza”. Euronews (in Rus.), 06.02.2025, <https://ru.euronews.com/2025/02/06/trump-plan-on-gaza-rubio-comments/> (download date: 06.02.2025).

⁵ “Netanyahu supported Trump's proposal to relocate the residents of the Gaza Strip”. Interfax (in Rus.), 06.02.2025, <https://m.interfax.ru/1006575/> (download date: 06.02.2025).

⁶ “Israel has withdrawn from the UN Human Rights Council”. RBK (in Rus.), 05.02.2025, <https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/tag/izrail-17032015/> (download date: 06.02.2025).

In this context, the information published by *Politiko*, indicating that the entourage of the newly elected American president supposedly considers his latest statement to be a “*diplomatic trick*”, does not correspond to reality. The platform from which the idea of eliminating the Palestinian factor in the Gaza Strip was announced was far not a pre-election podium, with its inherent loud statements and inconsequential populism.

Another matter is that the negative international and domestic American reaction to the plans for the “*Middle Eastern Riviera*” was so unexpected and strong that the White House may have had to organize such a leak to *Politiko*. Additionally, the press briefing by spokeswoman Caroline Leavitt, in which she stated that there were no plans for American development in Gaza⁸, does not unequivocally mean that the existing plan has been scrapped, and that Trump has backed away from his intentions and will not return to them.

In the context of this publication, it is not so much the fate of the scandalous initiative of the new American administration that is of interest, but rather the very fact of its emergence, made possible by the passive reaction of the international community to a series of incidents around the world and, in particular, in the South Caucasus. The focus is primarily on the events in Nagorno-Karabakh, which are chronologically the closest to the situation that has developed around Gaza and which in content echo the intentions of the new American administration to legitimize the planned ethnic cleansing of Palestine. A review of the world press, including the Arab, European, and American media, shows that this is exactly how the international community characterized the intentions announced by D. Trump⁹. The Arab League, the Islamic countries in general, and the liberal pole represented by the EU at the level of governments and supranational organizations are actively criticizing the American-Israeli plan for a “*comprehensive cleansing of Gaza*”, qualifying it as an action contradicting to the norms of international law and the moral values of the 21st century. They warn that this initiative, if implemented, will collapse the fragile balance in the Middle East, provoke total war, and torpedo the entire architecture of international security, since it will devalue the fundamental principles of equality and peaceful coexistence of nations laid down in the foundation of the UN.

It should be noted that this is an adequate assessment of the consequences of the declared American-Israeli steps: international law will cease to be considered an imperative determining order in the world. Furthermore, we are not merely addressing the substantive component of the law, which has often been compromised through interpretative substitutions. Instead, we are referring to the comprehensive dismantling of this institution, which could lead to a significant destabilization of the practice of international relations on a global scale.

⁷ “Trump’s entourage considered his words about Gaza a ploy”. Lenta.ru (in Rus.), 06.02.2025, <https://lenta.ru/news/2025/02/06/okruzhenie-trampa-poschitalo-ulovkoy-ego-slova-o-gaze/amp/> (download date: 06.02.2025).

⁸ “The White House clarified Trump’s plans regarding the Gaza Strip”. Lenta.ru, 06.02.2025, <https://lenta.ru/news/2025/02/06/okruzhenie-trampa-poschitalo-ulovkoy-ego-slova-o-gaze/amp/> (download date: 06.02.2025).

⁹ “Trump proposed seizing the Gaza Strip and expelling Palestinians. What the media are saying”. Izvestiya (in Rus.), 05.02.2025, <https://iz.ru/1834089/2025-02-05/tramp-predlozhil-zakhvatit-sektor-gaza-i-vyselit-palestintcev-chno-pishut-smi/> (download date: 06.02.2025).

And yet, it is difficult to call D. Trump himself and his administration the initiators of the liquidation of international law. The initiative regarding Gaza, according to its authors, is more a consequence of the overall devaluation of law, rather than a trigger for negative transformations.

The process of devaluation began a long time ago and became an inevitable consequence of the policy of double standards, arbitrary interpretations, and manipulations universally practiced by international institutions and centers of power. As a result, the “right of force” becomes the prevailing method for solving international problems, which in reality only deepens the existing contradictions on the international stage and creates new ones. In this context, the radical ideas and programs of D. Trump are merely a visible post-factum manifestation of the devaluation of international law and its derived results. Essentially, the U.S. president is simply trying to legitimize the practice of ethnic cleansing, which has long been widely employed in global conflicts with the tacit consent of the international community and its supranational institutions.

At one time, the policy of forcibly evicting Greek Cypriots, Kosovo Serbs, Rohingya Muslims, and others did not elicit an adequate response from the international community, nor did it prompt the activation of countermeasures prescribed by the UN Charter and relevant international legal acts. One of the most indicative examples of the devaluation of international law was the act of forcible liquidation of the Republic of Artsakh, followed by the ethnic cleansing of Karabakh Armenians under the slogans of establishing “*fair peace and tranquility*” in the South Caucasus. With the exception of a small number of countries and international human rights organizations, which responded to the events in NK with declarative statements and appeals, the international community, in a broad sense, left unnoticed the fact of the ethnic cleansing of Armenians in September 2023, which was preceded by a 9-month blockade of Artsakh. The parallels with the methodology used in Gaza are obvious: total blockade, carpet bombing under the pretext of an “*anti-terrorist operation*”, and the expulsion of the population from their land.

Nevertheless, there are fundamental differences in the origins and course of the Artsakh–Azerbaijan and Palestine–Israel conflicts that differentiate the legal bases and motives of Baku and Tel Aviv’s actions. The Republic of Artsakh, despite the efforts of Azerbaijani propaganda, has never been associated with terrorist entities on the international stage and has not committed acts similar to the Hamas operation of October 7, 2023, which actually triggered the latest events around Palestine.

The independent Armenian statehood in Nagorno-Karabakh was formed as a result of the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Baku, Sumgait, Kirovabad, and throughout Azerbaijan as a forced measure to protect the lives and rights of the indigenous inhabitants of the region. Stepanakert has laid the foundations of its sovereignty in strict accordance with international law, conducting all the necessary procedural measures prescribed by the USSR Constitution for secessionist entities¹⁰. The legal basis for the existence of the Republic of Artsakh was impeccable, and its democratic state model met all

¹⁰ Melik-Shahnazaryan A. “The Exit of the NKR from the Azerbaijani Republic in 1991”. KiberLeninka (in Rus.), <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/vyhod-nkr-iz-azerbaydzhanskoy-respubliki-v-1991-g> (download date: 10.02.2025).

the requirements of the “*progressive world community*”, which prompted many international organizations to recognize the superiority of Karabakh’s democracy over the autocratic regime of Azerbaijan.

Stepanakert has always advocated demilitarization and the establishment of peace and good-neighborliness in the region, being open to compromise with Baku and finding mutually acceptable conditions for the coexistence of the two nations in the region. Despite being *de jure* unrecognized at the international level, Artsakh actively interacted with recognized countries and supranational institutions, thereby *de facto* transforming into a subject of regional politics. Formally not having a voice in international politics, Artsakh unilaterally adhered to the norms and legal acts developed by the international community and its institutions to combat such pressing global issues as terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, etc.

Thus, the NKR has been able to institutionally establish an order on its controlled territory, in accordance with the letter and spirit of international law and the values laid down in the foundation of the “*progressive democratic world*”.

The end of this unique experience was marked by the Azerbaijani aggression of 2020, followed by the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh Armenians in September 2023. As a result, the Armenian democratic state was forcibly liquidated, its population was violently expelled from their historical homeland under the threat of genocide, and the military-political leadership was subjected to trials that violated the procedural norms and rules provided by international law.

The dissolution of Artsakh’s statehood, coupled with acts constituting war crimes against humanity, has neither been condemned nor prevented. To date, there has been an insufficient response from the international community and key supranational bodies tasked with upholding international law. The rights and freedoms of Karabakh Armenians have been totally violated, and this fact has not received the proper political assessment, which once again demonstrates the selective approach of countries and international structures to the problems of oppressed peoples and ethno-confessional groups. Against this backdrop, the global noise raised around the Palestinian issue and Trump’s plans to evict the population of Gaza seems somewhat contrived. There is no legal or moral explanation as to why the ethnic cleansing of Armenians should proceed in conditions of total silence and, in some cases, the encouragement of crimes, while the possibility of a Palestinian precedent has literally stirred the international community. From a legal and moral standpoint, the position of the Palestinians themselves, on whose behalf Hamas congratulated Azerbaijan on November 10, 2020, calling the outcome of the 44-Day War “*a natural result of the struggle against all forms of occupation*”¹¹, also did not withstand criticism.

It is difficult to say whether the intention of the Americans to occupy Gaza together with the Israelis fit into the current Palestinian notion of “*all forms of occupation*” or

¹¹ “Hamas congratulated Azerbaijan on the Karabakh agreement”. Anadolu Ajansi (in Rus.), 10.11.2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/азербайджан-борьба-за-целостность/хамас-поздравил-азербайджан-с-соглашением-по-карабаху-/2038801/> (download date: 10.02.2025).

whether they consider this to be an exceptional case in their opinion. In any case, the “boomerang law” does not recognize exceptional cases.

On February 6, 2025, U.S. president Donald Trump imposed sanctions against the International Criminal Court (ICC) with the general formulation: “*for the illegal persecution of the United States and its closest allies, primarily Israel*”¹². Thus, the systemic crisis of international law is evidently transitioning into the phase of its collapse, and the “right of the strong” is now becoming the undisguised dominant in the process of reorganizing the world order.

Donald Trump is indeed dismantling the existing world order, but it is hardly his person who bears the full responsibility for the bankruptcy of the universal system of international law and the degradation of its values.

¹² “Trump imposed sanctions against the International Criminal Court. In response, the ICC promised to continue its work”. BBC (in Rus.), 06.02.2025, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/articles/c15z2wv8ejo/> (download date: 07.02.2025).