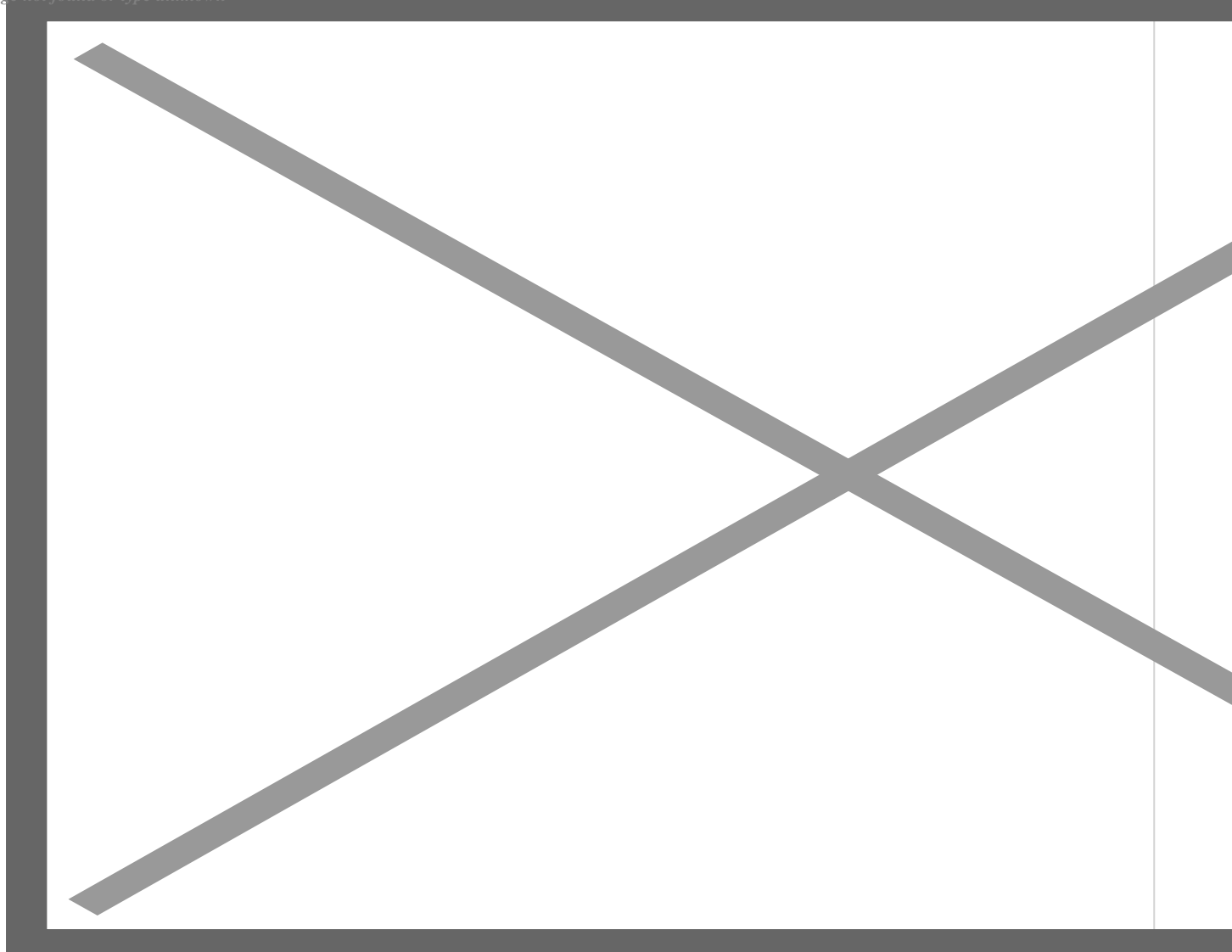


Trump says no right of return for Palestinians under his Gaza proposal

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Asked whether Palestinians would be allowed to return to Gaza under his plan, US president says: "No, they wouldn't."

Washington, February 11 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump has confirmed that his proposal for mass displacement in Gaza does not include a right of return for Palestinians in the enclave. In an interview with Fox News, partially aired on Monday, Trump also reiterated his push to "own" Gaza.

Asked whether Palestinians would be allowed to return to their territory under his plan, Trump said, "No, they wouldn't."

The U.S. president's plan to empty Gaza of its population has been forcefully rejected across the Middle East – including by Egypt and Jordan, the main countries that Trump says he wants to host displaced Palestinians.

Rights groups have also condemned the push, saying that it would amount to ethnic cleansing. Trump's assertion that he is seeking the permanent displacement of people in Gaza appears to contradict recent comments by his aides who said that the enclave's residents would be able to return after the area is rebuilt.

Last week, White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said people in Gaza would be "temporarily relocated".

Secretary of State Marco Rubio also said that the displacement of Palestinians in Gaza would be in the "interim", and residents would be able to "move back in" after reconstruction.

In His Fox News interview, Trump suggested that the U.S. would leverage its aid to Jordan and Egypt to get the two countries to take in displaced Palestinians. "I think I could make a deal with Jordan. I think I could make a deal with Egypt. You know, we give them billions and billions of dollars a year," the U.S. president said.

He added that Palestinians would live in "beautiful communities" away from Gaza. "In the meantime, I would own this. Think of it as a real estate development for the future," he said.

The plan for the U.S. to take over Gaza has raised eyebrows across the world. Washington has no legal claim to the territory, and the United Nations Charter prohibits the acquisition of land by force -- not that this matters to the U.S. under Trump.

According to the Health Ministry in Gaza, Israel's U.S.-backed war on the enclave has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians. The Gaza Government Media Office puts the death toll at more than 61,700, including thousands of missing people who are presumed dead.

The Israeli offensive has turned much of Gaza into rubble. But the territory's residents have pledged to remain steadfast in their land.

Local authorities have been pleading for tents and mobile homes to shelter people until reconstruction begins, accusing Israel of hindering the aid in violation of the ceasefire agreement.

Last week, Amnesty International warned that systemic efforts to expel Palestinians in Gaza could constitute a crime against humanity. "Amnesty International also warns against the misuse of desperately needed humanitarian aid and reconstruction as a bargaining chip or as a means to coerce Palestinians in Gaza into leaving," the group's chief Agnes Callamard said in a statement.

“No state is entitled to treat a protected population living under occupation as pawns in a geopolitical chess game.”

In 1994, UN experts defined ethnic cleansing as “a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas.”

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