

6. Peace negotiations in the Middle East

- The Middle East was the scene of eight negotiations in 2025, accounting for 15% of the total number of cases worldwide.
- The negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme experienced ups and downs and were affected by the 'Twelve-Day War' pitting Iran against Israel and the US.
- The negotiations to address the conflict in Yemen remained deadlocked in 2025, in part due to the impact of regional upheaval on the country.
- Following mediation by Oman, the US and the Yemeni armed group the Houthis agreed to a ceasefire that did not include Israel.
- Despite the ceasefire agreement in late 2024, Israel continued to conduct almost daily attacks in Lebanon.
- The agreements announced in 2025 only relatively lowered the extraordinary levels of violence in Gaza.
- Following the expansion of territories occupied by Israel in Syria, Netanyahu's government and the new Syrian government initiated contacts, but talks remained stalled.
- The regime change in Syria activated internal processes of dialogue and conflict management, in parallel with dynamics of tension and violence.

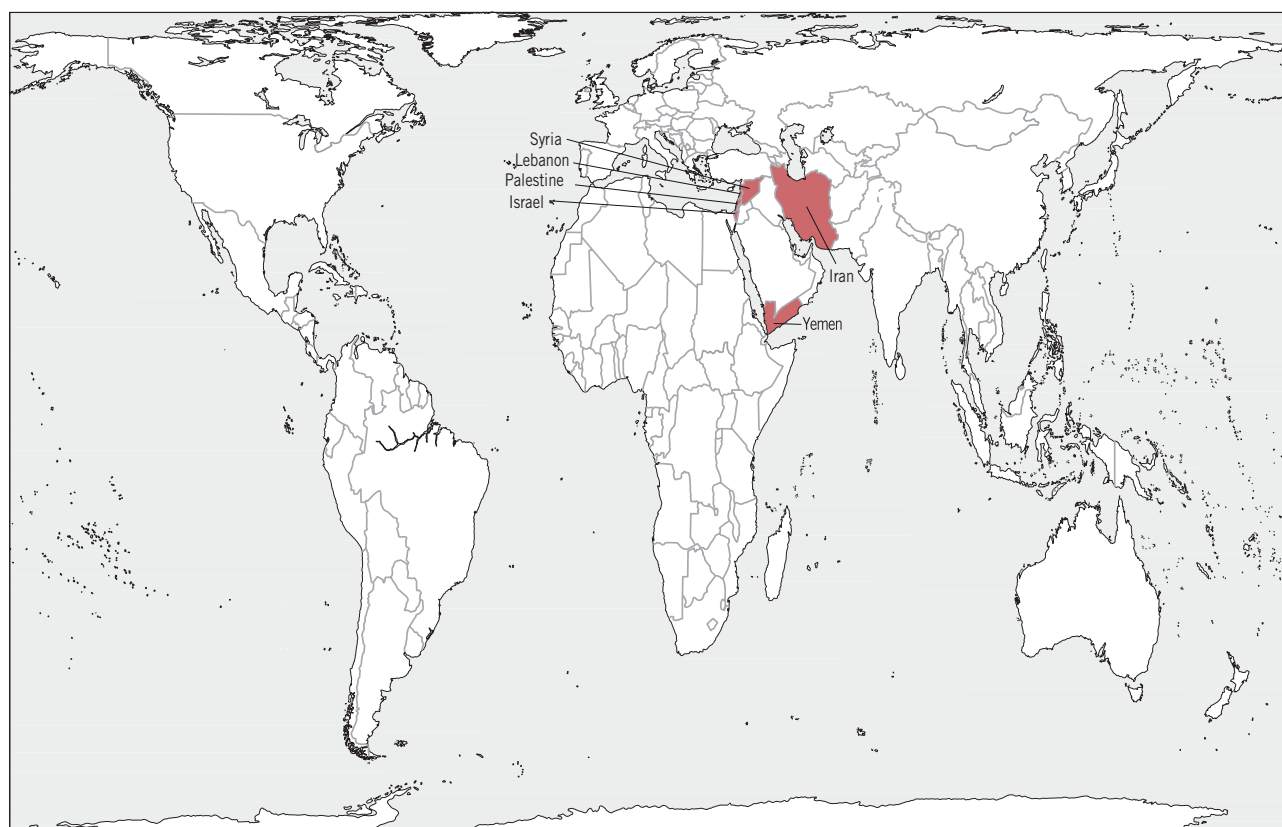
This chapter analyses the main peace processes and negotiations in the Middle East throughout 2025. First, it presents the main characteristics and general trends of the negotiating processes in the region. Second, it studies the evolution of contexts during the year, including references to the gender perspective and implementation of the international agenda on women, peace and security. At the beginning of this chapter, a map is also presented identifying the countries of the Middle East that were the scene of negotiations in 2025.

Table 6.1 **Summary of peace processes and negotiations in the Middle East in 2025**

Peace processes and negotiations*	Negotiating actors	Third parties
Iran (nuclear programme)	Iran, France, United Kingdom, Germany, China, Russia, EU, USA	UN, Oman, Qatar
Israel – Lebanon (Hezbollah)	Government of Israel, government of Lebanon, Hezbollah	USA, France, UN
Israel – Palestine	Government of Israel, Hamas, PA	USA, Qatar, Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, Arab League, UN
Israel – Syria	Government of Israel, government of Syria	UN, USA, United Arab Emirates (UAE), France, Azerbaijan
Palestine	Hamas, Fatah, other Palestinian political groups	Egypt
Syria	Government, political and armed opposition groups, regional actors	UN, USA, France, Saudi Arabia
Yemen	Internationally recognised Yemeni government (backed by Saudi Arabia), Houthis / Ansar Allah, Saudi Arabia	UN, Oman, ICRC
Yemen (Houthis) – USA	Yemen (Houthis), USA	Oman

* Peace negotiations in bold are described in this chapter.

Map 3.1. Peace negotiations in the Middle East in 2025



■ Countries with peace processes and negotiations in the Middle East in 2025.

6.1 Negotiations in 2025: regional trends

This chapter analyses eight negotiating processes that took place in the Middle East in 2025, that account for 15% of all peace processes worldwide in the last year. There were two more cases than the previous year. Five cases were related to armed conflicts –Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah), Israel-Palestine, Syria, Yemen and Yemen (Houthis)-USA– and the other three were linked to socio-political crises: one associated with the development of Iran’s nuclear programme, another connected to tensions between Syria and Israel and the third related to the dispute between the Palestinian groups Hamas and Fatah. All cases are analysed in this chapter with the exception of the last one (Palestine), due to the fact that its dynamics in 2025 were closely shaped by and linked to the trend of the Israel-Palestine negotiations that focused on Gaza. Most of the negotiations (five) were associated with international disputes, which have increased in recent years: Iran (nuclear programme), Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah), Israel-Palestine, Israel-Syria, Yemen (Houthis)-US. The other two cases involved internationalised internal conflicts (Syria and Yemen) and one an internal dispute, in Palestine. Compared to the previous year, more negotiations were identified in 2025, alongside a

regional scenario characterised by an increase in conflicts and mounting tensions, particularly since late 2023.

Governments were **involved in all the negotiating processes in the region**, whether through direct or indirect contacts, with representatives of other states or of non-state armed actors. The negotiating process surrounding Iran’s nuclear programme stood out for its multilateral dynamic, involving representatives of various states. On the one hand, consultations took place between Iran and diplomats from Germany, France and the United Kingdom (E3) throughout the year. On the other hand, parallel negotiations were held between Tehran and Washington through indirect contacts that derailed following the start of the Israeli attack on Iran in June. In other cases, the process was framed within a bilateral dynamic, involving two governments, such as that of the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu and the new Syrian government led by Ahmed al-Sharaa. In cases such as Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah), official contact took place between representatives of the respective states, although Hezbollah, a non-state political and armed actor in confrontation with Israel played a key role. Armed groups that participated in other negotiations operated as de facto governments in the territories under their control. This was the case of the Houthis, who control the north and much of the centre of Yemen. Through Omani mediation, they

reached an agreement with the US after several months of intense US military strikes and despite the fact that Washington had applied a more stringent “terrorist organisation” designation to the group. The Houthis were also major players in the Yemeni peace process, which involved other political and armed actors, including the internationally recognised government. Following the fall of Bashar Assad’s regime in Syria in late 2024, Ahmed al-Sharaa assumed leadership of the transition and became involved in various kinds of initiatives with armed, political and social actors. One of them, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), maintained control of 25% of Syrian territory. Along with his former armed group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), al-Sharaa had also been designated as ‘terrorist’ in the past.

Third parties were involved in all cases in the region, in line with observations made in previous years. Various countries performed mediation and/or facilitation tasks in the negotiations. Several states from the region stood out in this regard. For example, Oman played a mediating role in the ceasefire between the US and the Houthis in Yemen in 2025, continued to host meetings between Yemeni disputing actors to advance the implementation of some agreements and was also involved in the indirect negotiations between the US and Iran over the latter’s nuclear programme, facilitating meetings both in the Omani capital, Muscat, and at the Omani embassy in Rome. Oman’s role as mediator in these cases would have been favoured by its diplomatic relations with both Washington and Tehran, as well as with the Houthis, who maintain a representative office in the sultanate. Qatar was another country in the region involved as a third party. The country was due to host the fifth round of negotiations between the US and Iran, which were ultimately suspended due to Israel’s attack on Iran that led to the so-called ‘Twelve-Day War’. The negotiating process in which Qatar was most involved, however, was Israel-Palestine, where it assumed a mediating role alongside Egypt and the US. As part of that role, Qatar was even the scene of an Israeli attack in which members of the Hamas negotiating delegation were killed. As in previous years, Egypt was involved in intra-Palestinian dialogue initiatives. Saudi Arabia also assumed various roles as a third party in peace processes in the region: alongside France, it continued to promote an initiative to revitalise the two-state solution in the Palestine-Israel context; it became involved in facilitating a ceasefire and a cooperation deal for border demarcation between Syria and Lebanon; and, according to reports, it joined forces with Egypt and Qatar in an attempt to persuade the US to influence Israel to halt its offensive in Lebanon.

Regarding actors from outside the region, **the role of the US was especially important both for the number of negotiating processes in which it was involved and for the forms and impact of the initiatives promoted**

Regional countries such as Oman, Qatar, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia played third-party roles in various negotiation processes

by the Trump administration. Washington was involved in four of the eight processes analysed in the region (Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah), Israel-Palestine, Israel-Syria and Syria), in addition to its role as a negotiating actor regarding the Iranian nuclear issue. Its role as a third party was ambivalent, however, considering that it presented itself as a mediating actor whilst at the same time offering decisive political and military support to one of the parties involved in most of these conflicts: Israel. Washington’s positions demonstrated its partiality and alignment with the interests and positions defended by Israel, and this was even staged in some episodes, such as the announcement of the plan for Gaza alongside the Israeli prime minister in October, which excluded Palestinians and was presented as an ultimatum to Hamas. US actions in this area were channelled largely through special envoys appointed by President Trump, principally US Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff and US Special Envoy for Lebanon and Syria Tom Barrack. In addition to its involvement in negotiations, the US participated in monitoring mechanisms such as the one overseeing the Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah) ceasefire, in which the UN and France were also present. The European country most publicly active in promoting mediation and facilitation initiatives in the Middle East was France, which continued to be involved in the Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah) negotiating process, promoted the conference on the two-state solution alongside Saudi Arabia and became involved in mediation efforts between Damascus and the SDF in Syria. In terms of regional organisations, the Arab League presented a plan for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip as a way to advance the two-state solution. The initiative responded in part to the alarm generated by Trump’s previous statements opening the door to the expulsion of the Palestinian population from Gaza to countries in the region, primarily Egypt and Jordan.

In line with previous years, **the UN was involved in the vast majority of the peace processes in the region, though with a changing role, diminished or affected by contradictions** arising from the way the different contexts developed. One such example concerned the negotiations over Iran’s nuclear programme. Following the reimposition of sanctions on Tehran and the expiration of the framework established by the agreement in force since 2015 (JCPOA), disagreement persisted among members of the UN Security Council at the end of 2025 over the role that the international organisation should continue to play in this area, which had previously and primarily focused on facilitating and monitoring commitments undertaken in the deal. Following the fall of Bashar Assad’s regime and the beginning of a new phase in Syria, questions also arose over the role of the UN, which continued to argue that the roadmap defined in 2015 contained principles applicable to the new phase. After the special envoy

for Syria resigned in September and a technical and strategic assessment was produced, the UN Secretary-General was considering options for the UN's future involvement in the country. In the meantime, two of the UN missions established decades ago to monitor ceasefires in the region saw their operations and prospects compromised. In the case of Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah), the UNIFIL mission continued to participate in the mechanism monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire agreement of November 2024. However, during 2025, UNIFIL's mandate was approved to expire at the end of 2026. The mission had become increasingly uncomfortable for Israel due to its observation and reporting of ceasefire violations, which influenced the US to pressure the UN Security Council to end its mandate. The operations of UNDOF, the mission monitoring the ceasefire and separation of forces between Israel and Syria since 1974, were directly affected by Israel's expansion of its occupation of Syrian territory since late 2024. UN mediation initiatives for Yemen remained blocked, in part as a consequence of the impact of regional upheaval dynamics and the interrelationship of conflicts on the country. In the case of Israel-Palestine, the UN Security Council ultimately validated Trump's plan for Gaza, despite much criticism, including from UN representatives themselves.

The **negotiating agendas** in the region addressed different issues, though efforts aimed at achieving or implementing ceasefires particularly stood out. This observation aligns with what has been seen in previous years. It is also consistent with analyses produced in the last 15 years asserting that ceasefire agreements have become more important as a mechanism for addressing armed conflicts, particularly in the MENA region, alongside a decline in broader and more comprehensive peace processes that tackle the root causes of conflicts amid the proliferation of actors involved both in those conflicts and in mediation initiatives. Various ceasefires were announced in the cases analysed in the region throughout 2025, though the vast majority were characterised by their fragility, recurrent violations or partial scope, and therefore by an often limited and relative reduction in violence. Thus, for example, the ceasefire between the US and the Houthis excluded Israel, so it did not address the hostilities between Netanyahu's government and the Yemeni group, which continued throughout the year. The ceasefire announcements in the cases of Israel-Palestine and Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah) were continuously violated by Israeli forces. In the latter case, for example, the ceasefire was broken daily by Israeli attacks on Lebanese soil since its implementation. In Yemen, the ceasefire that remains de facto in force

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resisted amid an increasingly fragile atmosphere. In Syria, meanwhile, the main episodes of violence reported in 2025 led to fragile ceasefire agreements that reduced but did not prevent the persistence of violent incidents in various parts of the country.

Withdrawal from territory was another issue present on the negotiating agendas of the Israel-Palestine, Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah) and Israel-Syria cases, given the expansion of land occupied by Israel. Following the October agreement promoted by the Trump administration, Israeli forces in Gaza had withdrawn to the 'yellow line', which became the new limit there and meant that Netanyahu's government maintained control of more than 50% of the territory. The next phase (in 2026) planned for a further withdrawal, conditional on the disarmament of Hamas and the deployment of an 'International Stabilisation Force'. Previously, the ceasefire agreement announced in January had failed in part due to Netanyahu's refusal to withdraw from the Philadelphi Corridor, a strategic area separating Gaza from Egypt. In the Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah) context, Israel withdrew from most of southern Lebanon that it had occupied during the 2023 hostilities in accordance with one of the provisions of the November 2024 ceasefire agreement. By late 2025, however, it maintained five positions and two 'buffer zones' north of the Blue Line (the de facto border). In the case of Israel-Syria, Damascus insisted on demanding Israel's withdrawal and the reinstatement of the agreement in force since 1974, whilst Netanyahu's government persisted in its refusal to withdraw from the areas occupied since 2024 and repeated its intention to occupy these areas indefinitely.

The disarmament of armed actors, particularly non-state armed actors, was another issue concerning negotiations in the region. As mentioned regarding the Israel-Palestine case, phase two of the agreement for Gaza announced by Trump planned for the disarmament of Hamas. The group indicated its willingness to hand over its defensive weapons, but not its offensive ones. In the case of Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah), the disarmament of the Shia group was one of the key issues. The November 2024 ceasefire agreement provided that the Lebanese government must prevent attacks on Israel and confiscate and dismantle Hezbollah's arsenals and those of other armed groups. In this vein, the Lebanese authorities presented a plan to try to ensure the state monopoly on the use of weapons, but the timeline was unclear and Hezbollah insisted that it would not agree to disarmament or to the eventual integration of its militiamen into the Lebanese Armed Forces until Israel's expulsion from Lebanon was guaranteed. However, the

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Lebanese government did secure an agreement with the Palestinian Authority in 2025 for the disarmament of Palestinian factions within the PLO orbit in Lebanon. The question of how armed factions linked to Druze and Kurdish groups would be integrated into the new Syrian Armed Forces was one of the prominent points of the talks in Syria, whilst mistrust and dynamics of violence persisted. The exchange of prisoners was another item on the negotiating agendas for Israel-Palestine and Yemen. In the former, the January and October ceasefire agreements included provisions relating to the release of persons held by both Israel and Hamas. Thus, by the end of the year, the Palestinian group had handed over all the Israelis it held, alive and dead, with the exception of one (who was released in January 2026). As part of the implementation of previous agreements in Yemen (Stockholm, 2018), during 2025 the terms of a new prisoner exchange between the parties to the conflict were agreed to be carried out in 2026.

As outlined, the **trend of the negotiations** changed little, with some remaining blocked (Yemen) or showing little progress beyond the initiation of indirect contacts (Israel-Syria) or certain expectations at the beginning of the year (Iran's nuclear programme). Ceasefires that were reached, such as in the cases of Israel-Palestine, Yemen (Houthis)-US and Syria, or implemented, such as in the Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah) conflict, were fragile, partial or continuously violated. The ceasefires therefore only partially or relatively reduced violence against civilians, who were subjected to extremely severe impacts and, in some cases, limited and insufficient access to humanitarian aid to try to alleviate dire needs. Thanks to local mediation efforts and UN support, the reopening of roads that had been closed for seven years due to the armed conflict in Yemen stands out as a positive point due to its practical impact on people, its consideration as a confidence-building step between the parties and its demonstration that it is possible to reach understandings through dialogue.

Finally, the widespread lack of inclusiveness and the nearly exclusive predominance of male leadership in high-level positions once again shaped **gender issues and the participation of women in negotiating processes** in the Middle East. One of the few exceptions was the involvement of UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Passchaert in the monitoring mechanism for the Israel-Lebanon (Hezbollah) ceasefire. Nevertheless, women in the region, whose roles are analysed in Lebanon, Yemen and Syria in this chapter, continued to be involved in emergency responses to conflicts, in condemning their impacts, in demanding effective ceasefires and in calling for substantive participation in defining the future of their countries, moving beyond tokenistic approaches. Women's

organisations and feminist groups took advantage of the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (October) to amplify their demands.

6.2 Case study analysis

Mashreq

Israel - Lebanon (Hezbollah)	
Negotiating actors	Government of Israel, government of Lebanon, Hezbollah
Third parties	USA, France, UN
Relevant agreements	UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006), Cessation of hostilities agreement (2024)

Summary:

Since 1978, the United Nations has been operating in southern Lebanon through an interim force (UNIFIL) to try to secure the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the country and to help the Lebanese government to restore its authority in the area, where Palestinian groups are active. The mission's mandate has changed over the years, in line with developments. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which encouraged the creation of the Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah, led to a new period of hostilities. In 2000, Israel withdrew its forces along the Blue Line, the separation line with Lebanon established by the UN that serves as a de facto border between both countries. In 2006, following clashes between Hezbollah and Israel, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1701, which established a cessation of hostilities to be supervised by UNIFIL. In more than two decades, the resolution has not led to a permanent ceasefire or a long-term solution and successive reports on its implementation indicate repeated violations of the agreement's provisions. In 2022, Washington brokered the agreement that fixed the maritime borders between Israel and Lebanon for the first time. Hostilities around the Blue Line intensified again significantly from October 2023, following the Hamas attacks on 7 October 2023, the start of the Israeli offensive against Gaza and Hezbollah's decision to launch attacks against Israel in solidarity with the Palestinian population. In November 2024, Israel and Lebanon reached a new and fragile cessation of hostilities agreement after mediation by the United States and France.

After a ceasefire agreement was reached between Israel and Lebanon in November 2024 following mediation by the US and France,¹ attention in 2025 was devoted to monitoring its implementation in a seriously fragile atmosphere. Although violence decreased following the entry into force of the cessation of hostilities, **repeated violations of the agreement occurred throughout the year**. Israel continued to carry out attacks on Lebanese soil nearly daily (one every four hours on average), according to estimates. Netanyahu's government declared that it wanted to eliminate Hezbollah members or prevent it from rebuilding its military capabilities. Israeli attacks killed more than 400 people, including over 100 civilians.² Hezbollah was not involved in attacks against

1. The text of this agreement is available at the PA-X database: *Announcement of a Cessation of Hostilities and Related Commitments on Enhanced Security Arrangements and Towards the Implementation of UNSCR 1701*, 27 November 2024.

2. See the summary on Israel-Hezbollah in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2026! Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2026.

Israel in 2025, not even during the “TwelveDay War” between Israel and Iran in June,³ though other regional allies of Iran did participate.

Pursuant to the provisions of the cessation of hostilities agreement, in mid-February Israel withdrew from most of southern Lebanon that it had occupied during the hostilities that broke out in 2023. However, it did not withdraw from all territory. At the end of the year, Israel continued to violate the withdrawal conditions and maintained military forces in five positions and two “buffer zones” north of the Blue Line (the de facto border between Israel and Lebanon, though it is not officially recognised). The Israeli government has stressed that it will hold these positions until Israel is certain that Hezbollah will not return to the area south of the Litani River. The ceasefire agreement stipulates that the Lebanese government will prevent Hezbollah and other armed groups from launching attacks against Israel and that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) will dismantle infrastructure and confiscate unauthorised weapons, among other tasks. During 2025, the LAF expanded its deployment in southern Lebanon and removed weapons and explosives from the area. In August, the Lebanese government approved a plan to guarantee the state monopoly on the use of arms by the end of 2025 and tasked the LAF with carrying it out. The plan involves the disarmament of Hezbollah and other armed groups, although it does not establish a detailed timeline for doing so. The roadmap drawn up by the LAF was questioned and rejected by Hezbollah and its main political ally, Amal. Some Hezbollah leaders said that the group would not accept total disarmament, whilst others suggested that its forces could only be integrated into national institutions after securing Israel’s expulsion from Lebanese territory, among other things. Meanwhile, the Lebanese authorities’ attempts to achieve a state monopoly on force led to an agreement between the Lebanese and Palestinian presidents in May to secure the disarmament of Palestinian factions within the PLO’s orbit in refugee camps in Lebanon. Therefore, the agreement does not involve the Palestinian groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, also active in the country. By November, weapons had been handed over in eight of the 12 camps.

Throughout the period, **the ceasefire was overseen by the Ceasefire Monitoring Mechanism**, which is military in nature and the only communication channel between the parties. Prior to the November 2024 agreement, a similar mechanism had been established

by UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Originally tripartite, involving Israel, Lebanon and UNIFIL, it was expanded to include the US and France. Washington, which acts as mediator, but is also Israel’s main political and military ally, assumed leadership of the mechanism. UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert also participated in the meetings. In December, the mechanism incorporated civilian representatives from Lebanon and Israel for the first time. These representatives participated in two meetings and reportedly stressed the importance of focusing on conditions for the safe return of displaced populations, moving forward on reconstruction and addressing economic needs. The Lebanese government said that civilian participation in this mechanism, which Hezbollah criticised as a ‘concession’, was not a step towards the normalisation of relations with Israel. The US reportedly urged Beirut repeatedly to engage in direct dialogue with Israel, including through its new ambassador to Lebanon, Michael Issa. A personal friend

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of Trump, Issa said that support for Lebanon was conditional on the disarmament of Hezbollah. Following the announcement of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in October, the Lebanese president stated that his country was willing to negotiate to end Israeli occupation, but that this required a predisposition to dialogue that he did not observe in Netanyahu’s government. Hezbollah warned that negotiations with Israel could lead to domestic upheaval. At the end of the year, in a highly volatile regional context, it emerged that Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Qatar were also urging the US to pressure Israel to de-escalate in Lebanon.

In mid-2025, the UN Security Council decided to renew UNIFIL’s mandate for the last time, as the mission had become an increasingly uncomfortable actor for Israel due to its observation work and its reporting of violations. Among other things, UNIFIL warned of Israel’s constant violations of Lebanese airspace, the construction of walls within Lebanese territory and Israeli fire in areas near UNIFIL personnel. Influenced by Israel, the US took a highly critical stance towards UNIFIL and pushed for the mission to be terminated by mid-2026, but following negotiations with other Security Council members, it was extended until the end of the year in UNSC Resolution 2790.⁴ The text establishes that in June 2026, the UN Secretary-General must present options on how to continue implementing UNSC Resolution 1701 after UNIFIL’s withdrawal, in a scenario that presupposes a greater deployment and control by the LAF in the southern part of the country. Questions remained over the impact of the withdrawal

3. See the summary on Israel, USA - Iran in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2026! Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2026.

4. United Nations, *Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2790 (2025), Security Council Extends Mandate of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon*, SC/16159, 28 August 2025; Security Council Report, *UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL): Vote on Final Mandate Renewal and Drawdown, What’s in Blue*, 28 August 2025.

on the prospects for stabilisation in the area and on the monitoring of the ceasefire.⁵

Gender, peace and security

Lebanese women were largely excluded from the negotiations in 2025. The November 2024 ceasefire was limited to military and security issues and did not include any provisions related to civil or humanitarian affairs. Furthermore, the subsequent talks, as well as the monitoring mechanisms, lacked a gender perspective.⁶ Despite their absence from high-level spaces, Lebanese women were active in multiple areas, including in providing emergency responses to the impacts of the conflict, as well as in awareness-raising and advocacy to give visibility to the impacts of the war on women and girls in the country and the region, to condemn the dynamics of militarisation in the Middle East and to demand peace and a real ceasefire. Some initiatives took advantage of the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security to address the UN Security Council. Other initiatives engaged in dialogue with women from other countries in the region, particularly Syria, and insisted on demands for inclusion. Additionally, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert was involved in the meetings of the ceasefire monitoring committee, where she reportedly advocated for adding others to the conversation.

Israel-Palestine	
Negotiating actors	Government of Israel, Hamas, PA
Third parties	Qatar, Egypt, USA, France, Saudi Arabia, Arab League, UN
Relevant agreements	Israel – PLO Mutual Recognition (1993), Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (Oslo I Accords), Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area (Cairo Agreement) (1994), Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II) (1995), Wye River Memorandum (1998), Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum (1999), Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (2003), Annapolis Conference Joint Understanding on Negotiations (2007)

Summary:
The peace process launched in the 1990s has not resulted in an agreement between the parties on the most complex issues borders, Jerusalem, settlements, Palestinian refugees and security or the creation of a Palestinian state. Since the timetable established by the Oslo Accords broke down

a series of rounds of negotiation have been conducted and various proposals have been made, but they have all been unsuccessful. The peace process has developed amidst periodic outbursts of violence and alongside the fait accompli policies of Israel, including about its persisting occupation. These dynamics have created growing doubts about the viability of a two-state solution. Meanwhile, after periods of escalating violence, truce and cessation of hostilities agreements have been reached between the Israeli government and Palestinian armed actors.

Various initiatives were promoted to address the situation in Palestine in 2025. By the end of the year, they had relatively managed to lower the extraordinary levels of violence previously observed, but no other prospects were offered for a just and lasting long-term solution. The second administration of Donald Trump, who returned to the presidency in January, played a particularly prominent role in these initiatives, taking a position clearly aligned with Israel's interests. Therefore, alongside its involvement as a purported mediator, the US continued to provide key political and military support to Netanyahu's government.

Diplomatic efforts intensified in January 2025, in a regional context marked by the Israel-Lebanon agreement (November 2024) and the fall of Bashar Assad in Syria (December 2024). US President Joe Biden was interested in achieving results before the end of his term and Trump had explicitly declared his interest in reaching a rapid agreement on Gaza. The mediation of Qatar, Egypt and the US led to the announcement of a ceasefire agreement on 15 January. The agreement, which came into force four days later, was structured in three phases. The first, lasting 42 days, provided for the exchange of Israelis held by Hamas in Gaza for Palestinians detained by Israel (including an important number of women)⁷, expanded access for humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the most populated areas. Hamas then released 33 Israelis and five Thais, whilst Israel released approximately 2,000 Palestinians. The agreement held despite persistent Israeli attacks in Gaza and accusations that Israel continued to block access to essential goods, in addition to charges that Hamas was staging hostage handover ceremonies. In the second phase, which had no set timeline, the remaining living Israelis held by Hamas were planned to be exchanged for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel and Israel would completely withdraw its forces from Gaza. In a third phase, the bodies of deceased Israeli hostages and soldiers would have been exchanged for deceased Hamas fighters and the reconstruction of Gaza was supposed to be launched.

5. Najia Houssari, *What UNIFIL's looming departure means for Lebanon's volatile southern border*; Arab News, 5 May 2026; Philip Loft, *Lebanon and the end of UNIFIL's mandate in 2026*, House of Commons Library, 24 September 2025.

6. Poppelreuter, Philip, Qabas al-Musawi, Alexander Bramble, *Gendering Ceasefires in the MENA Region: The Cases of Gaza and Lebanon*, Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy and Inclusive Peace, AGDA Insight, November 2025.

7. The first two rounds of prisoner/detainee swaps between Israel and Hamas in January 2025 saw the release of all Israeli women who had been in Hamas captivity since October 2023. Israel also released Palestinian women and teenage prisoners first.

According to the timetable agreed in January, details on this second phase were to begin to be negotiated in February, but as the weeks passed it became evident that Netanyahu's government did not wish to move to the second phase. The first phase expired on 1 March without an agreement. In the meantime, Israel announced that it had no intention to withdraw from the Philadelphi Corridor, a strategic area separating Gaza from Egypt, and demanded that Hamas release all 59 hostages it held in exchange for extending the first phase of the agreement. The Israeli government presented the proposal as conceived by the US Envoy for the Middle East, Steve Witkoff. Washington validated the approach even though it contravened the plan presented in January. Faced with Hamas' rejection, which considered the change of conditions a violation of what had been agreed, Israel suspended humanitarian aid, intensified the blockade on Gaza and broke the ceasefire. The military campaign resumed on 18 March and intensified heavily in the following weeks, with extremely serious impacts on the civilian population. The humanitarian situation worsened, leading to an international famine alert. Various analysts said that Hamas had remained committed to the January agreement and identified various reasons for Netanyahu to resume the Israeli attacks, including internal political calculations to guarantee his government's survival.⁸

In October Trump presented a 20-point plan, including a new ceasefire that led to a limited and relative decrease in violence

In the months that followed, diplomatic efforts were exerted to secure a new ceasefire alongside the development of other initiatives. During a visit by Netanyahu to the White House in February, Trump expressed support for expelling the population of Gaza to Jordan and Egypt and for the US to take control of Gaza to build a 'riviera' in the Middle East. The Arab League countries presented a counterproposal in March based on rejecting the displacement of the Palestinian population. The Arab plan prioritised the reconstruction of Gaza as a way to advance the two-state solution, suggesting that Gaza be temporarily administered by a committee of technocrats and committing a vast amount of resources, which led some analysts to call it a 'Marshall Plan' for Gaza. The Arab League's counterproposal received the support of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, China and several major European countries (Germany, Italy, France and the United Kingdom), whilst the EU considered it a serious basis for future discussions. In July, expectations were raised again about the possibility of a temporary ceasefire, but Witkoff's proposal for a 60-

day ceasefire in exchange for a new prisoner exchange gained no traction.

Amid international alarm over the dire situation in Gaza and the rise in Israeli violence in the West Bank, diplomatic initiatives aimed at giving new impetus to the two-state formula accelerated. **A high-level conference on the two-state solution was held in July. Promoted by France and Saudi Arabia, it resulted in the New York Declaration**, a roadmap that includes a ceasefire in Gaza, the release of hostages held by Hamas, the disarmament of the Palestinian group, the deployment of a stabilisation mission under the mandate of the UN Security Council and the establishment of conditions for a Palestinian state and the normalisation of relations between Israel and Arab countries. The declaration was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in September.

Days later, around a dozen countries announced their formal recognition of the State of Palestine.⁹ Assessments were mixed, as some viewed it as a positive step given the Israeli government's open opposition to a Palestinian state, whilst others thought that it risked remaining merely rhetorical and diverted attention from the urgent need to stop the genocide.¹⁰

Amid growing accusations of genocide, including from the UN Committee of Experts, and regional alarm and international condemnation following the Israeli attack on Hamas' negotiating delegation in Qatar, Trump presented a 20-point plan that he described as 'historic and unprecedented'.¹¹ Though it did share some material with the New York Declaration, it was unequivocally more aligned with Israel's interests, took a murky approach to any prospects for a future Palestinian state, was drawn up without Palestinian contributions and was conceived as an ultimatum.¹² Point 19 of the plan, which was announced at a joint press conference with Netanyahu at the White House, established that, depending on progress made in the reconstruction of Gaza and reforms to the Palestinian Authority, 'it is possible that conditions may finally be created for a credible path towards self-determination and the creation of a Palestinian state'. The plan focused on Gaza, making no mention of the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem or the situation of the Palestinian refugee population and offering no prospects for defending Palestinian rights. Trump gave Hamas a deadline of a few days to accept his proposal and warned that he would give Israel the green light to continue its attacks if it did not acquiesce.

8. For more information, see International Crisis Group, *Stopping Israel's War in Gaza*, ICG, 21 March 2026; Escola de Cultura de Pau, 'Israel rompe el acuerdo de alto el fuego en Gaza y escala sus ofensivas en Cisjordania con devastadores impactos', in *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz*, April 2026.

9. The states that formally recognised the State of Palestine in September 2025 were Andorra, Australia, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal and the United Kingdom, raising to 157 the total number of countries that have done so.

10. For more information, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, 'Israel enfrenta creciente aislamiento por el genocidio en Gaza, mientras Trump propone nuevo plan para la Franja' in *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz*, October 2025.

11. *El País*, *Estos son los 20 puntos del acuerdo presentado por Trump para el fin de la invasión israelí de Gaza*, 29 September 2025.

12. For more information, see Pamela Urrutia, *Palestina: ¿paz mínima o paz c justicia?*, *Nationalia*, 24 October 2025.

Trump's plan was implemented in October and had led to a relative decrease in violence by the end of the year, although persistent Israeli attacks continued to claim Palestinian lives. As part of the implementation of the first phase, Hamas handed over all the Israeli prisoners it held and Israel withdrew to the 'yellow line', which became a new limit within Gaza, meaning that Netanyahu's government controlled over 50% of the territory. Humanitarian aid resumed distribution, but it remained woefully insufficient. The second phase of the plan, which was to begin in 2026, planned for the dismantlement of Hamas' offensive arsenals, though the group has refused to hand over its defensive ones, and a further Israeli withdrawal that would lead to Gaza's occupation by an International Stabilisation Force, whose composition had not yet been determined, but was estimated at between 20,000 and 30,000 personnel. The plan also provided for the establishment of a technocratic government composed of Palestinian and international representatives that would be supervised by the 'Board of Peace' led by Trump himself. At some unspecified point, this Board of Peace would cede control of Gaza to a 'reformed' Palestinian Authority, although the criteria for assessing this have not been established. In this context, various analysts said that Trump's plan established a new model of control and guardianship that replicates a colonial administration for the Gaza Strip. Despite this and the plan's many ambiguities, it was endorsed by the UN Security Council through Resolution 2803, adopted in November with Russia and China abstaining. The resolution was widely criticised, including by UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese, who warned of Trump's plan serious violations of international law.¹³ Palestinian women organisations and activists insisted that any solution to end the genocide not come at the expense of accountability or respect for international law and used international fora and events like the 25 anniversary of the 1325 UNSC resolution to denounce the gendered impacts of violence.¹⁴

Israel – Syria	
Negotiating actors	Israel, Syria
Third parties	UN, USA, United Arab Emirates (UAE), France, Azerbaijan
Relevant agreements	Ceasefire agreement (1973), Agreement on Disengagement Forces (1974)
Summary: In the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, also known as the 'Yom Kippur War', Syria unsuccessfully attempted to use its military to recover the Golan Heights area that Israel had occupied in the 1967 war. The armed conflict then led to an UN-promoted ceasefire (1973) and a disengagement of	

forces agreement (1974) between Israel and Syria, which have technically been at war since 1948. To monitor the implementation of the agreement, a UN observer mission (UNDOF) was established in the Syrian Golan Heights. Since then, the mission has monitored compliance with the ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian troops, the demilitarised separation area established in the agreement and the restriction of military forces from both countries in the Golan area. Following the fall of Bashar Assad's regime in Syria in December 2024, the situation in the Golan Heights has changed significantly. The Israeli government announced its disengagement from the 1974 agreement, launched a series of aerial and ground military incursions into the area to prevent the deployment of forces from the new Syrian government and sent troops into the demilitarised zone where the agreement only allowed the presence of UNDOF. Israel justified its actions on national security grounds and has announced its intention to occupy the area indefinitely. Meanwhile, the new Syrian government has condemned these incursions, demanded the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Syria and reaffirmed its commitment to the 1974 agreement. In 2025, contacts were initiated to address the crisis between the two countries.

After attacking and dismantling Syrian arsenals following Assad's ouster in late 2024 and disavowing the validity of the 1974 agreement that established a separation area between Syria and Israel, Netanyahu's government expanded its occupation and control of territories in southern Syria adjacent to the Golan Heights. During 2025 Israeli forces launched continuous attacks that were not limited to the southern zone and even reached Damascus. Israel justified its actions on security grounds, explicitly announced its intention to remain in the occupied area indefinitely and demanded the complete demilitarisation of southern Syria, asserting that it would not allow forces from the new Syrian government in the area. The new authorities in Damascus condemned the attacks on their territory, urged the UN and other international actors to react to Israel's expansionist ambitions and reasserted Syria's commitment to the separation agreement that had been in force since 1974. In this context, around the middle of the year, first indirect, then **direct contacts were initiated between the new Syrian government led by Ahmed al-Sharaa and Netanyahu's government.**

According to reports, indirect talks began in May and were mediated by the US and facilitated by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). From then on, discreet direct meetings were initiated under Washington's mediation, some of which would have been held in Azerbaijan. These **initial dialogues may have been aimed at avoiding escalation and direct confrontation between the parties.** The Syrian president acknowledged these contacts and also said that he had called on countries with diplomatic ties to Israel, such as the US and France, to press Israel to halt its actions on Syrian soil. These

13. For more information, see Escola de Cultura de Pau, 'El riesgo de normalizar (aún más) el genocidio, el apartheid y la vulneración del derecho internacional', *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz*, January 2026.

14. NGO Working Group on WPS, Statement by Ms. Noura Erakat at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, 6 October 2025.

contacts between Israel and Syria were cut short in July following an escalation of violence in Syria that involved and particularly affected the Druze population in the town of Suweida and triggered a fresh rise of Israeli attacks. Netanyahu's government stepped up its military operations in Syria under the argument of protecting the Druze population, though many questioned its sincerity. On 18 July, the US announced that a 'ceasefire' had been reached. The US Special Envoy for Syria and Lebanon, Tom Barrack, assured that the agreement committed Israel and Syria and that it was backed by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, as well as by Türkiye, Jordan and other neighbouring countries.¹⁵ Bilateral contacts resumed and involved US Special Envoy for Lebanon and Syria, Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani and Israeli Minister for Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer. Meetings were held in Paris and Baku, some with the mediation of France. The US reportedly pressed for normalisation of relations between the parties and for progress towards an agreement before the UN General Assembly in October.¹⁶ In the weeks that followed, Netanyahu confirmed that direct negotiations were ongoing with Syria and there were conflicting reports that an agreement might be imminent.¹⁷

By the end of the year, however, the talks remained at an impasse as Israeli attacks continued. The atmosphere was also tense due to Netanyahu's visit to Israeli troops in southern Syria in November, which al-Sharaa's government considered provocative. According to media reports, Israel refused to withdraw from all the territories occupied in southern Syria since December 2024 and was only willing to withdraw from some of them in exchange for a broad agreement with Damascus, not just a security agreement. The Syrian government was reportedly opposed to any normalisation agreement with Israel whilst the occupation of the Golan Heights continued.¹⁸ Publicly, Netanyahu said that an agreement with Syria was possible in December, but he also insisted that it hinged on the establishment of a demilitarised zone between Damascus and the separation area established in the 1974 agreement. This statement came a day after Trump warned against any attempt to destabilise Syria and the new leadership of al-Sharaa, whom he praised after strengthening ties with him in 2025.¹⁹ Throughout the year, the US government lifted sanctions on Syria and the terrorist designation that had weighed on al-Sharaa and other members of his circle. Trump received al-Sharaa at the White House in November, in the first visit by a Syrian president to the US in decades.

Finally, in its statements and periodic reports on

UNDOF, the UN condemned Israeli violations of the agreement, the impact of Israeli forces' operations and activities in Syria, the effects on the mission's work and the violation of Security Council resolutions. The UN Secretary-General urged that full compliance with the 1974 agreement must be restored at a minimum and the UN Special Envoy for Syria warned that Israel's 'fait accompli' in Syria would be difficult to reverse.

Syria	
Negotiating actors	Government, political and armed opposition groups, regional actors
Third parties	UN, USA, France, Saudi Arabia
Relevant agreements	Geneva Communiqué from the Action Group for Syria (2012); UNSC Resolution 2254 in support of the International Syria Support Group Roadmap for a Peace Process (Vienna Statements (2015))

Summary:

Following the start of the uprising against the Bashar al-Assad regime in 2011, given the serious consequences of the armed conflict in Syria and amidst concern about the regional repercussions of the crisis, various regional and international actors tried to facilitate a negotiated solution and commit the parties to a cessation of hostilities. However, regional actors' and international powers' different approaches to the conflict, together with an inability to reach consensus in the UN Security Council, hindered the possibilities of opening the way to a political solution. After a brief and failed attempt by the Arab League, the UN took the lead in the mediation efforts, led by special envoys Kofi Annan (2012), Lakhdar Brahimi (2012-2014), Staffan de Mistura (2014-2018) and Geir Pedersen (2018-2025). Other initiatives have come from the EU, United States, Russia and leaders of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG). In 2015, the ISSG peace talks in Vienna -led by Washington and Moscow and in which twenty countries and international organizations participated- resulted in a peace plan for Syria that was endorsed by Security Council resolution 2254 the ONU. As of 2017, in parallel to the UN-led Geneva process -which included intra-Syrian talks- a new channel began: the Russian-backed Astana process, which also involve Türkiye and Iran. In 2023, the Arab League began a new attempt to get involved in addressing the Syrian crisis. The various rounds of negotiations held since the beginning of the armed conflict showed deep differences between the parties and were not been able to halt the high levels of violence in the country. The fall of Bashar Assad regime in December 2024 opened a new chapter in the country's history, with broad challenges for the transition.

The overthrow of Bashar Assad's regime in December 2024 and the rise to power of new authorities opened a new scenario in Syria, leading various local, regional and international actors to recalibrate their positions,

15. Barak Ravid, *Israel and Syria agree to a ceasefire, U.S. envoy says*, *Axios*, 18 July 2025.
16. France 24, *Syria, Israel hold US-mediated talks in Paris on regional de-escalation*, 20 August 2025.
17. Reuters, *Israel says conclusion of talks with Syria contingent on demilitarisation, safeguarding Druze*, 24 September 2025; Mireille Rebeiz, *For warweary Syria, potential benefits of security pact with Israel comes with big risks*, *The Conversation*, 9 October 2025.
18. The New Arab, *Israel-Syria security deal talks 'reach dead end', Israeli sources say*, *The New Arab*, 18 November 2025; Abby Sewell, *Syria's top diplomat and an Israeli delegation meet in Paris as US pushes for normalizing ties*, 20 August 2025.
19. Lazar Berman, *After Trump warning, Netanyahu says he is open to deal with Syria, but holds firm on demands*, 2 December 2023.

with some of them involved both in the dynamics of the armed conflict and in initiatives to address it. Throughout the year, the new government led by Ahmed al-Sharaa attempted to tackle some of the country's internal fractures and problems. Initiatives included a national dialogue forum and agreements with political and armed actors, although the implementation of such initiatives raised questions about their scope. The persistence of violence and particularly bloody episodes in some parts of the country exposed the fragility of the new scenario and the enormous challenges of the new phase. The transition period may extend over a period of five years, according to announcements. In a context of a loss of influence in the country suffered by Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, allies of the deposed Assad, the new government sought to configure new alliances, attempted to reposition the country on the international stage, approached the US and other regional actors (Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and others) and secured the lifting of sanctions against al-Sharaa and other members of his government for their links with groups designated as terrorist. In addition, the Syrian government worked for the revocation of part of the sanctions affecting reconstruction activities in the country.

In late February, the new authorities promoted a national dialogue conference that produced a series of recommendations for a new Constitution and the internal reconciliation process, among other issues.

The dialogue was presented as an inclusive process. However, as a two-day event attended by around 900 people, doubts and questions were raised about its ability to maintain detailed discussion, its rigour and its representativeness, given the lack of clarity on the criteria for selecting the participants. Al-Sharaa's government also promoted the establishment of a mechanism for local transitional justice and missing persons. The fact that the mechanism was focused only on crimes committed by Bashar Assad's regime, and not on those perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, also drew criticism. At the same time, various escalations of violence occurred throughout the year. Among other effects, they exposed old and new dynamics of conflict and the difficulties faced by the new government in controlling armed groups theoretically under its orbit of influence. Some of the most serious episodes of violence affected areas where some of Syria's minorities are concentrated, including Alawites on the coast (Latakia and Tartous) and Druze populations in the south (Suweida). The fragile ceasefire agreements that resulted did not prevent violent incidents from recurring in these areas until the end of the year. In

Suweida, the escalation triggered new Israeli incursions into Syria, this time on the grounds of supporting the Druze population.²⁰ The intensification of violence in Suweida gave way to negotiations that led to a US-mediated ceasefire in July. In September, a roadmap was announced to address the crisis in Suweida and stabilise the area following a tripartite meeting between the US, Syria and Jordan. Early in the year, al-Sharaa's government had reached an understanding with Druze leaders to integrate their armed factions into state forces under Damascus' authority.

With regard to the Kurdish question in Syria, the Syrian transitional government and the Kurdish leadership of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) reached an agreement in March according to which the 70,000-strong SDF would transfer control of the 25% of Syrian national territory

they controlled for integration into the new Syrian Armed Forces before the end of the year. Signed by al-Sharaa and SDF leader Mazloum Abdi, the eight-point agreement involved the declaration of a nationwide ceasefire, the dissolution of autonomous Kurdish structures, the recognition of the Kurds as an integral part of Syria, the return of displaced populations and other issues.²¹ The details of the agreement were to be finalised in the following months, but the negotiations stalled and increasingly led to mutual accusations and clashes from August onwards, especially in the Aleppo area (which intensified in early 2026, displacing more than 140,000

people). Kurdish SDF leaders demanded a secular and decentralised state during the year and questioned the new Syrian authorities' ability to guarantee minorities' security. According to some analysts, the experience in Suweida may have decisively convinced Kurdish forces to distrust the agreement with Damascus and to hold on to their weapons to control their areas of influence, as they feared that disarmament would leave them exposed to attacks by Islamist groups aligned with al-Sharaa. Meanwhile, the transitional government believed that the SDF threatened the unity of the Syrian state and, in its interest in taking control of the northeast, had a key ally in Türkiye. Ankara, which described the Syrian Kurdish forces as an extension of the PKK, publicly accused them of becoming the main obstacle to peace and stability in Syria and declared its readiness to support the Damascus government in consolidating its territorial control of the country. Therefore, it was expected that the development of the Kurdish question in Syria and the negotiating process between Türkiye and the PKK would continue to interact with and influence each other.²² The rapprochement between the new Syrian government and Washington, which had until

The Syrian transitional government and the Kurdish leadership of the SDF reached an agreement in March, but negotiations stalled in August and the parties were involved in mutual accusations and clashes

20. See the summary on Israel – Syria in this chapter.

21. Andrés Mourenza, *Las milicias kurdas firman un acuerdo histórico para devolver el territorio bajo su control al Estado sirio*, El País, 11 March 2025.

22. See the summary on Türkiye-PKK in chapter 5 (Europe).

then had the SDF as its main ally in the country due to its role in the fight against ISIS, was also a factor to consider in the internal balance of forces and prospects for negotiation.

The new scenario in Syria also raised questions about the role of the UN, which in recent years had attempted to promote negotiations to address the armed conflict through political channels. In September 2025, Norwegian diplomat Geir Pedersen announced his resignation as UN Special Envoy for Syria after nearly seven years in the post. Until then, Pedersen had insisted on the inclusion of valid principles on the importance of an inclusive government and a new constitution that would pave the way for free and fair elections in UNSC Resolution 2254, which outlined a roadmap for a peaceful transition in Syria in 2015. Throughout 2025, Pedersen emphasised the importance of a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process and of addressing the situation of foreign fighters in the country, whilst urging Damascus to seek UN support on these issues. He also warned of the lingering risks linked to foreign interference in the country and the need to take action to regain the trust of minorities most affected by the violence in 2025.²³ Following the commissioning of a technical and strategic assessment, in late 2025 the UN Secretary-General was evaluating the organisation's future involvement in Syria. Finally, **after incidents in the border area in March, the new Syrian government and the Lebanese government announced a ceasefire agreement and signed a cooperation agreement** for border demarcation, in meetings facilitated by Saudi Arabia.²⁴

Gender, peace and security

The transition process gave rise to a series of uncertainties regarding governance and inclusion issues, particularly with respect to women's participation in decision-making spaces concerning the future of the new Syria. Within government positions, women's representation was found to be very limited—only one woman served as a minister in the cabinet—and their marginalization became evident in the indirect parliamentary elections held in October. Only six women were elected to the 119-seat legislature—equivalent to 4%, even lower than during the al-Assad era (10–13%). Feminist organisations also criticised the approach, dynamics and results of the national dialogue.²⁵ In this context, feminist activists warned about the exclusion of Syrian women and cautioned against a tokenistic approach by the new authorities.²⁶

The Gulf

Iran (nuclear programme)	
Negotiating actors	Iran, France, United Kingdom, Germany, China, Russia, EU, USA
Third parties	UN, Oman, Qatar
Relevant agreements	Joint Plan of Action (provisional agreement, 2013), Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (2015) endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231

Summary:

Under scrutiny by the international community since 2002, the Iranian nuclear programme has become one of the main sources of tension between Iran and the West, particularly affecting Iran's relationship with the United States and Israel. After more than a decade of negotiations, and despite the fact that various proposals were made to resolve the conflict, the parties failed to reach an agreement and remained almost unchanged in their positions. The US, Israel and several European countries remained distrustful of Tehran and convinced of the military objectives of its atomic programme, whilst Iran continued to insist that its nuclear activities were strictly for civilian purposes and in conformance with international regulations. In this context, the Iranian atomic programme continued to develop whilst the UN Security Council, US and EU imposed sanctions on Iran and threats of military action were made, mainly by Israel. Iran's change of government in 2013 led to substantive talks on nuclear issues, facilitated new rounds of negotiations and ended in a deal aimed at halting the Iranian atomic programme in exchange for lifting the sanctions. In 2015, Iran and six other countries (China, the USA, France, the United Kingdom and Russia, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany) signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). After several years of implementation, the Trump administration withdrew from the agreement in May 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Iran as part of a policy of "maximum pressure" on Tehran. Since 2019, Iran has been gradually moving away from compliance with the provisions of the agreement and has stepped up its nuclear programme.

The negotiations surrounding Iran's nuclear programme followed a bumpy path in 2025 and were directly affected by the 'Twelve-Day War' that pitted Israel and the US against Iran in June,²⁷ whilst developments observed in the second half of the year raised questions about the continuity of the negotiating framework in force since 2015. Amid the gradual deterioration in the implementation of the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, the JCPOA, the year had begun with cautious expectations following the resumption of direct diplomatic contacts between Tehran and the three European countries involved in the agreement: France, the United Kingdom and Germany (E3). Resumed in

23. Amberin Zaman, UN special envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen steps down after six years, 18 September 2025.

24. Associated Press, Lebanon and Syria agree to ceasefire after 2 days of border clashes, Syrian defense ministry says, AP, 17 March 2025; Enab Baladi, Syria and Lebanon sign agreement for cooperation in border demarcation, 28 March 2025.

25. Syrian Women's Political Movement, Statement of the Syrian Women's Political Movement on the National Conference Dialogue, February 2025.

26. Alaa Al-Muhammad, New Faces, Old Barriers: Women Locked Out of Syria's Transition, 14 November 2025.

27. See the summary on Israel, USA-Iran in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, Alert 2026! Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding, Icaria: Barcelona, 2026.

November 2024, these were the first contacts since the Vienna process negotiations had been suspended in August 2022. A new round was held in early 2025, which the parties described as ‘consultations’, not ‘negotiations’, and as serious and constructive. These meetings took place a week before Donald Trump’s return to the White House, who had decided to withdraw from the JCPOA agreement during his first term, in 2018. In this context, some members of the Iranian regime called on the new US administration to enter into negotiations.

Trump’s second term resumed the policy of ‘maximum pressure’ on Iran through threats and sanctions, but at the same time he declared that he was open to negotiating a new nuclear agreement. In early March, the US President communicated that he had sent a letter to Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to express his desire to initiate new negotiations and to warn that Iran’s rejection would expose it to military consequences. Members of the Iranian government ruled out direct negotiations with Washington as long as it maintained its threats and its policy of ‘maximum pressure’, but dismissed the possibility of dialogue through third parties. Thus, on 12 April, the first indirect meeting took place between official US and Iranian delegations in Muscat, the capital of Oman. Both sides described the meeting as ‘constructive’ and ‘promising’ and the decision was made to continue the dialogue.²⁸ In the months that followed, new meetings were held in Muscat and at the Omani embassy in Rome. According to reports, the meetings addressed issues such as Tehran’s uranium enrichment (the US wanted to eliminate it, but Iran was willing to limit it), the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) supervision system and the lifting of sanctions. The indirect contacts were led by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, and the third meeting also included a technical meeting of experts to develop the framework for a possible agreement. Some analysts interpreted this meeting as a sign that the parties were considering realistic and pragmatic options and wished to explore their details.²⁹

In the weeks that followed, the US and Iran made contradictory statements about the imminence and content of a possible agreement. On 31 May, an IAEA report found that Tehran had accumulated significant reserves of uranium enriched to high levels (up to 60%), well above the limit established in the JCPOA. On **12 June, for the first time in 20 years, the IAEA Board of**

The Israeli attack against Iran dynamited the prospects for negotiations on the nuclear program and halted direct contacts between Tehran and Washington

Governors censured Iran, considering that its atomic activities violated its obligations as a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Despite this, no actions by Iran to militarise its nuclear capabilities had been verified, and both the IAEA and CIA reports had concluded that there was no evidence that Tehran had activated a plan to develop nuclear weapons. On 13 June, a day after the IAEA Board’s decision, Israel, which possesses atomic weapons and is not a signatory to the NPT, launched a massive attack against Iran, claiming to destroy its nuclear and ballistic missile programme and asserting that Tehran was on the verge of obtaining an atomic weapon, though it presented no evidence. The Israeli attack dynamited the prospects of the ongoing negotiations two days before a new round of meetings scheduled for 15 June in Qatar. Internationally condemned as a violation of the

UN Charter, the Israeli attack was followed by large-scale strikes against Iran’s nuclear facilities at Isfahan, Natanz and Fordow on 22 June. Two days later, Trump announced a ‘complete and total’ ceasefire between Israel and Iran. Hostilities ceased hours later amid claims of victory by all parties involved.

Following the attacks and despite Trump’s claims that he had ‘completely obliterated’ Iran’s nuclear facilities, questions persisted regarding the extent of the damage, Tehran’s capacity to resume its activities

and the fate of approximately 400 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60%. Likewise, various analysts underscored the impact of the ‘Twelve-Day War’ on the prospects for nuclear negotiations, as it marked a point of no return by altering the basis on which the non-proliferation architecture with respect to Iran had been built, and by the possibility that it could decisively change Tehran’s willingness to accept inspections, among other effects.³⁰ The E3 countries, which barely had information or room to influence the meetings held between the US and Iran in 2025, took different positions on the military strikes on Iran, with France describing them as illegal, the United Kingdom responding ambiguously and Germany supporting them. Some attempts were made to resume contact in the following months and information emerged about parallel rounds of talks between Iran and both the US and the E3 countries, including a meeting between deputy foreign ministers with France, Germany and the United Kingdom in Istanbul. These meetings were held amid warnings from the E3 that they would activate the ‘snapback’ mechanism if progress were not achieved before the end of August, which would reinstate UN sanctions against Iran.³¹ **At the end of**

28. Iker Seisdedos, *EEUU e Irán inician la negociación de un nuevo acuerdo nuclear tras un primer encuentro ‘prometedor’*, *El País*, 12 April 2025.

29. Jon Gambrell, *What do ‘expert level’ talks signal for the progress of the Iran-US nuclear negotiations?*, Associated Press, 26 April 2025.

30. For more information, see Enrique Mora, *El día que nació un Irán nuclear*, *Política Exterior*, 24 June 2025; and *Ataque de Israel y EEUU a Irán culmina en una tregua frágil y en un escenario incierto*, in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz*, July 2025.

31. *Deutsche Welle*, *Irán confirma nueva negociación nuclear con países europeos*, DW, 21 July 2025.

August, the E3 fulfilled its ultimatum and initiated the procedure for the automatic reversal of the sanctions relief that had been approved as part of the JCPOA. In September, IAEA Director Rafael Grossi said that the agency’s inspectors had only had access to the Bushehr nuclear facilities. Following a meeting in Cairo, Grossi and Araghchi agreed on ‘practical modalities’ to resume inspection tasks.³²

Nevertheless, in the absence of a new UN Security Council resolution halting the ‘snapback’ procedure, the UN sanctions regime against Iran was reinstated in September. The EU, which coordinates the JCPOA joint commission responsible for overseeing implementation of the agreement and resolving related disputes, reimposed the sanctions that had been suspended in 2015 following its entry into force.³³ However, other actors closer to Iran, such as Russia and China, questioned the legality and timeliness of the reimposition of sanctions. On 18 October, the day the JCPOA formally expired (‘Termination Day’), Iran, Russia and China announced that they considered the provisions and restrictions of the agreement to have ended, and therefore also the validity of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that had supported it and included the ‘snapback’ mechanism. In November, the IAEA Board of Governors approved a resolution promoted by the E3 and the US demanding full access to inspections for Iran, and especially to the facilities that had been targeted in the ‘Twelve-Day War’. China, Russia and Niger opposed the resolution and the Iranian government considered it hostile, claiming that it undermined the agreement reached with Grossi in September to allow a limited return of inspections. By the end of the year, disagreement persisted among Security Council members over the legitimacy of the UN’s role to continue facilitating meetings and producing reports to examine the Iranian nuclear programme following the expiration of the framework established by the JCPOA.³⁴

Yemen	
Negotiating actors	Internationally recognised Yemeni government (backed by Saudi Arabia), Houthis / Ansar Allah, Saudi Arabia
Third parties	UN, Oman, ICRC
Relevant agreements	Stockholm Agreement (2018), Riyadh Agreement (2019), truce agreement (2022)
Summary: Affected by several conflicts in recent decades, Yemen began	

a difficult transition in 2011 after the revolts that forced Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down as president after more than 30 years in office. The eventful aftermath led to a rebellion by Houthis forces and former President Saleh against the transitional government presided over by Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who was forced to flee in early 2015. In March 2015, an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia decided to intervene militarily in the country in support of the deposed government. Since then, levels of violence in the conflict escalated. The United Nations, which has been involved in the country since the beginning of the transition, has tried to promote a political solution to the conflict, joined by some regional and international actors. Despite these initiatives, the meetings were unsuccessful, and the talks have been at an impasse since mid-2016. It was not until late 2018 that meetings between the parties resumed and led to the signature of the Stockholm Agreement at the end of that year, arousing cautious expectations about the possibilities of a political solution to the conflict. The hostilities have significantly worsened the security and humanitarian situation in the country. In 2019, under the mediation of Saudi Arabia, various actors signed the Riyadh Agreement to try to resolve the struggles and differences within the anti-Houthis faction. In 2022, the internationally recognized government backed by Riyadh and the Houthis reached a five-point truce agreement at the request of the UN. Though it ceased to be formally in force months later, in practice the de facto drop in hostilities and violence has held up, as well as some parts of the agreement. Meanwhile, in 2022 direct negotiations began between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis, mediated by Oman.

Negotiations to address the armed and political conflict in Yemen remained largely deadlocked in 2025, partially due to the consequences of the upheaval in the Middle East. Although the de facto truce in place in the country since 2022 has contributed to an overall decline in violence levels compared with the worst period of the armed conflict, the fragility of the situation became evident over the past year and the risks that the rifts between the different actors involved in the conflict would widen due to the lack of any substantive political process to address the country’s challenges.³⁵ The involvement of the Yemeni group known as the Houthis (formally Ansar Allah) in an open confrontation with Israel, the US and the United Kingdom since 2023 has influenced the dynamics of the Yemeni peace process and the calculations of its main actors. In this context, UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg insisted on various occasions during 2025 that regional de-escalation, including with in Gaza, was necessary to make headway in the Yemeni peace process, as both conflicts have become increasingly interconnected. Nevertheless, he warned that the situation in Yemen should not be addressed solely through a regional lens and that it is essential to focus on internal challenges

32. *NPR*, Iran and nuclear watchdog sign agreement seeking path to restart cooperation, 9 September 2025.

33. Council of the European Union, *Reversión automática de las sanciones contra Irán: el Consejo restablece las medidas restrictivas*, 29 September 2025.

34. *UN News*, Security Council remains divided over Iran nuclear programme, sanctions stay in place, 23 December 2025; UN Security Council, Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015), Twentieth report of the Secretary-General, S/2025/814, 15 December 2025.

35. For more information, see the summary on Yemen in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2026! Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2026.

and the Yemeni population, which has suffered for years from the violence and humanitarian crisis resulting from the armed conflict.

During the first quarter, the intense US airstrike campaign against the Houthis encouraged expectations among their internal adversaries of Washington's possible support for a ground offensive against them, but no such scenario took place.³⁶ The ceasefire reached between the Trump administration and the Houthis in May, which did not entail an end to hostilities between them and Israel, was assessed by Grundberg as an opportunity to revitalise the Yemeni peace process. Unlike the Biden administration, which appointed a special envoy for Yemen, the Trump administration, which took office in January, did not appoint a specific delegate to engage in the Yemeni process and did not become involved beyond the understanding with the Houthis. Despite the degradation of their military capabilities and many casualties among their ranks, some analysts underscored that the US campaign ultimately strengthened the Yemeni group domestically, which claimed victory after it ended.³⁷

In Yemen progress was made in some specific areas, resulting in the reopening of roads and agreements on prisoner exchanges

In the following months, successive armed clashes broke out between various Yemeni actors and reinforcements were deployed along the front lines. Despite these dynamics, progress was also made in some specific areas. In late May, largely thanks to local mediation efforts and with UN support, an agreement was reached to reopen the vital Dhale road, which connects the capital, Sana'a (under Houthi control) with the southern port of Aden (in the hands of the internationally recognised government) and which had been closed since 2018 due to the armed conflict. Traffic was also restored on roads connecting Ma'arib, Al Bayda and Abyan. The reopening was praised for its practical effects, such as reducing travel times, facilitating the movement of people and goods and improving access to healthcare for various communities, as well as for being a confidence-building step between the parties that demonstrates that it is possible to reach understandings through dialogue.³⁸ Along similar lines, and following 12 days of meetings in Oman, in December the parties to the conflict agreed on a new phase of prisoner exchange to be implemented in 2026 within the framework of the committee established for this issue under the Stockholm Agreement (2018).³⁹

The UN special envoy acknowledged that the negotiating environment had changed since late 2023, when the parties appeared to be moving towards a common roadmap,⁴⁰ but insisted that moving towards a lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict in Yemen required work on three priorities: 1) de-escalating on the front lines and addressing the principles of a ceasefire with the parties to the conflict; 2) convincing the parties to return to talks in line with the commitments made in December 2023 to draw up a roadmap; and 3) securing regional and international cooperation to support and stabilise Yemen, for example, through security guarantees regarding the Red Sea.⁴¹ The internal situation in Yemen became tense at the end of the year due to a dispute between different actors on the anti-Houthi side, who were involved in clashes supported by various regional actors. For months, disagreements and power struggles had been affecting the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), the eight-member executive body leading

the internationally recognised government. However, the situation escalated significantly in December when southern secessionist forces (STC) attempted to expand their control in governorates in the southern region (Hadramawt and Al-Mahra) with UAE support. This prompted Saudi Arabia to become militarily involved again, including through an attack on a UAE vessel that was allegedly transporting weapons to the secessionist forces. Riyadh has mediated in conflicts on the anti-Houthi side in the past. With Saudi help, the internationally recognised government regained control of territories in the early days of 2026 and political adjustments were made, including the expulsion of STC members from the PLC. The crisis encouraged diplomatic discussions between various actors and once again exposed the fragility of the situation in Yemen.

Gender, peace and security

Yemeni women's exclusion from formal negotiating spaces persisted in 2025. Their marginalisation continues despite their prominent role in local peacebuilding initiatives, community-level conflict resolution and critical initiatives for the daily survival of the population, such as to secure civilian access to water, for example. The Director of the NGO Centre for Civilians in Conflict, Dina El Mamoun, appeared before the UN

36. See the summary on Yemen (Houthis) – USA in this chapter and on Yemen (Houthis) – Israel, USA, United Kingdom in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2026! Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2026.

37. Maysaa Shujaa Aldeen, *The paradox of intervention: How US strikes in Yemen empowered the Houthis*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2025.

38. Escola de Cultura de Pau, 'Reapertura de carreteras clave tras años de bloqueo en las negociaciones', in *Escenarios de riesgo y oportunidades de paz*, July 2025.

39. OSESGY, Statement by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen at the conclusion of the tenth meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the implementation of the Detainees' Release Agreement, 23 December 2025.

40. OSESGY, Update on efforts to secure a UN roadmap to end the war in Yemen, 23 December 2023.

41. OSESGY, UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg's Briefing to the Security Council, 12 August 2025;

Security Council in May to condemn this exclusion and to warn of some of the invisible consequences of the conflict that disproportionately affect women, such as the increase in forced child marriages. The Yemeni Women's Union also produced an assessment stating that no political progress had been made for women in 2025 and highlighting the growing role of civil society in protecting women's rights and economic empowerment.⁴² The office of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen continued to try to open spaces to amplify women's voices and to ensure that their perspectives on peace, justice and inclusion are taken into account in efforts to move towards a political agreement. To mark the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, several days of debates were held in Taiz and Aden, in which warnings were issued about the growing risks for women assuming public leadership roles and the need for peace efforts to address the fragmentation of military and security institutions and to end impunity, among other issues.⁴³ In 2024, following a forum in Madrid co-organised by the UN and Spain, Yemeni women released a statement setting out some of their ideas for moving the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda forward in the country.⁴⁴

Yemen (Houthis) – USA	
Negotiating actors	Yemen (Houthis), USA
Third parties	Oman
Relevant agreements	Ceasefire Agreement/Understanding (2025)

Summary:
One consequence of the escalation of violence in the Middle East against the backdrop of the Gaza crisis is an armed conflict that has pitted the Yemeni armed group the Houthis (or Ansar Allah) against Israel, the US and the United Kingdom since late 2023 and that has featured the Red Sea as one of its main theatres. The Houthis, who have historically taken an antagonistic position towards the US and Israel and are a key ally of Iran in the region, have asserted that they would only stop their attacks after the end of the blockade and the Israeli military campaign in Gaza. After the Houthis began their attacks in the Red Sea, the Biden administration acted against them with a combination of force and international pressure, but no evidence emerged of negotiations or direct contacts between the parties. Donald Trump's return to power in the US increased pressure on the Houthis. Following an intense US military offensive against the group, a ceasefire was reached in May 2025 through the mediation of Oman. The agreement committed only Washington and the Houthis and did not end hostilities between the Yemeni group and Israel. Subsequently, the ceasefire agreement announced by the US for Gaza, which

did not lead to a cessation of hostilities, but rather to a relative reduction in violence, favoured de-escalation in this conflict as well, albeit in a fragile and uncertain scenario. The dynamics of this dispute could also have repercussions on the armed conflict between different Yemeni armed actors, in which regional actors have also become involved, as well as on its prospects for a negotiated solution.

The high levels of violence observed during the year partially subsided from May onwards following a ceasefire agreement involving the Houthis and the US. This limited agreement between two of the actors involved in the armed conflict affected only some of its dynamics, which continued to be characterised by ongoing clashes between the Houthis and Israel. Developments continued to be influenced by the crisis in the Middle East.⁴⁵ The ceasefire agreement between the Houthis and the US came after a severe US military offensive against the Yemeni group. Following Donald Trump's return to power in January, Washington had demonstrated its intention to take a hard-line towards the Houthis. As such, one of its first actions was to designate them as a terrorist group using a more severe category than that used by the Biden administration. In line with their policy of linking their attacks to the situation in Gaza, the Houthis had halted them in January following the announcement of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.⁴⁶ However, after Israel broke the truce and reimposed a total blockade on Gaza in March, the Houthis announced that they were resuming their attacks in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. In this context, the US launched an intense bombing campaign against the group, which also had significant impacts on the civilian population.

Unexpectedly, on 6 May, a week before visiting several Middle Eastern countries, Trump announced the suspension of his air campaign in Yemen during a meeting in the Oval Office with the Canadian Prime Minister. **Oman then reported that it had mediated a ceasefire agreement committing the Houthis and the US not to attack each other.**⁴⁷ Oman's mediating role may have been facilitated by its relations with Iran and with the Houthis, who maintain a representative office in the sultanate. According to reports, Oman contacted US Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff in early May, who immediately relayed the message to the White House. On 5 May, the day before the announcement, Trump had ordered US Central Command (CENTCOM) to halt attacks in Yemen. Washington thus suspended its attacks against the Houthis, who ceased their attacks in the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and pledged to ensure freedom of navigation and

42. Rahma Shanathour, Yemeni Women's Union: 2025, a Year Without Political Gains for Women, Jinha Agency, 3 January 2026.
 43. OSESGY, 25 years of women, peace, and security agenda: Yemen's path to inclusive peace process, 16 October 2025.
 44. OSESGY, From the Status Quo to a Transformation: Advancing Women, Peace and Security in Yemen, April 2024.
 45. For more information, see the summary on Yemen (Houthis) – Israel, USA, United Kingdom in chapter 1 (Armed conflicts) in *Alert 2026! Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding*, Icaria: Barcelona, 2026.
 46. See the summary on Israel-Palestine in this chapter.
 47. Foreign Ministry of Oman, Oman announces ceasefire agreement between Washington and Sanaa, 6 May 2025.

maritime commercial traffic in the area. The agreement ensured that US military vessels and those linked to US maritime commercial traffic would not be attacked. Both sides described the agreement as a victory.⁴⁸

The ceasefire agreement prompted many analyses of its possible impact and the motivations behind it. Some of them argued that Washington's acceptance of the truce highlighted the limitations of its air campaign, which had degraded the Yemeni group's capabilities but had not entirely eliminated them or its ability to attack or to significantly affect maritime traffic in a key area. They also underscored that the decision reflected the United States' reluctance to become embroiled in a wider armed conflict.⁴⁹ The armed conflict was not only highly costly for the US economically, but it also provoked growing international criticism of Washington over the high number of civilian casualties and the repercussions for the humanitarian crisis in the country, in addition to the diversion of military resources from other strategic areas. The Houthis' acceptance of the ceasefire may not have been motivated solely by the impact of the US military campaign, but also because, according to their calculations, an agreement would make Washington's support for a ground campaign launched by adversarial Yemeni groups less likely. Following the announcement, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen underscored that he hoped the understanding between the Houthis and the US would help to revitalise the deadlocked Yemeni peace process.⁵⁰

The ceasefire agreement between the Houthis and the US came after a severe US military offensive against the Yemeni group

One of the details that prompted the most speculation was that the ceasefire agreement was reached without including Israel, despite its strategic relationship with the US and its leading role in the conflict. Various sources confirmed that the announcement took Netanyahu's government by surprise, which was attributed to a tense atmosphere in bilateral relations over Israel's decision to resume the blockade on Gaza and the United States' involvement in negotiations with Iran over its nuclear programme at the time.⁵¹ Some analysts said that the understanding reached with the Houthis suggested an intention to secure US interests beyond Netanyahu's opinion. Following the ceasefire announcement, the Houthis publicly emphasised that it did not include an end to attacks on Israel. In the months that followed, clashes between Israel and the Houthis continued and were especially intense during the 'Twelve-Day War' between Israel and Iran, which ultimately involved the US.

Months later, in October, Trump's announcement of a 'peace plan' and a 'ceasefire' for Gaza, which in practice only entailed a relative drop in violence conducted by Netanyahu's government, prompted the Houthis to suspend their attacks against Israel once again. By the end of the year, the de-escalation was holding, albeit in a volatile climate given persistent Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, instability in Iran and the dynamics of the conflict between the Houthis and other Yemeni actors.

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48. Maysaa Shujaa Aldeen, *The paradox of intervention: How US strikes in Yemen empowered the Houthis*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2025.
49. Maysaa Shujaa Aldeen (op. cit) and Soufan Center, *US-Houthi ceasefire leaves questions unanswered*, Intelbrief, 12 May 2026.
50. See the summary on Yemen in this chapter.
51. See the summary on Iran (nuclear programme).

