

AN INTERVIEW WITH FR DAVID NEUHAUS SJ ON THE FUTURE OF GAZA

Father David Neuhaus has no hesitation. For him, the conjectures circulating in recent days on the future of the Gaza Strip felt like “a kick in the stomach”. Israeli Jesuit and professor of Scripture, David Neuhaus was born in South Africa to German-Jewish parents who fled Germany in the 1930’s.

The US President Donald Trump said last week that Gaza must be thought of as “*a large real estate site, and the United States will take possession of it, and develop it slowly, very slowly*”, to bring “*stability to the Middle East*”.

Father Neuhaus, what considerations can be made in view of the recent proposals that have emerged on the future of Gaza?

David Neuhaus: Trump, the president of the United States has a vision for Gaza, which he shared with the world on February 4, 2025. Mr. Netanyahu, prime minister of Israel, was visiting him. It felt like a kick in the stomach. And I am not even a Palestinian. I am an Israeli.

What in particular are you referring to?

David Neuhaus Trump’s boldly proclaimed plan is to transform the Gaza Strip from the heaps of rubble left by Israel’s military campaign, into a luxurious riviera. In that vision, there is no place for the people who call Gaza home. That population must be moved out (to where is far from clear). This is yet another stage in the removal of Palestinians from Palestine...

Do you see what is happening as part of a process?

David Neuhaus: Yes. It is a process that began long time ago. It was back in 1947/1948 that the population of Gaza more than tripled with the influx of those expelled by the Israelis from their homes inside Israel, making Gaza one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Mr. Trump spoke only about Gaza but Mr. Netanyahu’s administration has already begun to work on the West Bank, sowing Gaza-like destruction in the cities of Jenin and Tulkarm. Thousands of Palestinians have already been expelled from their homes.

Are the new ideas about the future of Gaza the only way to imagine the present and future of the Jewish state in the context of the current Middle East?

David Neuhaus Trump and Netanyahu’s vision is quite different from that of Peter Beinart, a Jewish American journalist. I strongly recommend his latest book, “*Being Jewish after the Destruction of Gaza: A Reckoning*” as an antidote to the discourse coming from US and Israeli leadership. Beinart reconstructs Jewish identity in the light of what has been happening in the past months, adamantly insisting that Israel’s only way forward is to ensure equality for all its citizens. Beinart, whose parents were Jewish South Africans, has fully assimilated the message of the struggle against apartheid. Another prophetic voice, that of Israeli activist Orly Noy, the chair of the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories B’tselem, proclaimed unequivocally: “*The war will end only when Israeli society realizes that it is not only immoral but also impossible to secure our existence through the oppression and subjugation of another people — and that the people we imprison, bomb, starve, and rob of their freedom and land are entitled to the exact same rights as we are, down to the last note*”.