The massive reworking of southern Gaza's population and landscapes
May 6, 2025 update: the new Tel Sultan compound

Citation for reference and use of data: Garb, Yaakov, 2025, "The massive reworking of southern Gaza's population and landscapes-1: the new Tel Sultan compound", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DCGC33, Harvard Dataverse

Yaakov Garb

This report and dataset describe one area of intensive Israeli military earthworks activity subsequent to the end of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas on March 18, 2025. It focuses on the surroundings of a compound of 81,000 m^2 (81 dunam) in the very northwest corner of the Gaza strip (marked as object 1 in the inset box in Figure 1 below). The activity in southern Gaza—including this area in particular —are significant in light of the declared new phase of Israeli army efforts following after the renewal of full-scale conflict on March 18. As described below, this phase new phase of the war, as sweepingly outlined by Israeli government officials, including intensive ground, air, and sea attacks, the relocations of populations to the southern part of the Gaza Strip, and more permanent occupation by Israeli forces, as described below. The rapid progress and the high level of clearance and leveling, the new access road, and the strategic positioning of this compound all suggest it is intended to take on a significant role in the intended next phase, possibly related to aid distribution and population sorting and separation.

Given the considerable chaos and churn in overarching development and Israel's announcements, it is important to examine actual developments on the ground for a more solid sense of Israel's intentions and commitments. This is the intention of the maps and data in this document and accompanying files, which will be updated and augmented as developments warrant. This continues a series of reports and deposits of geospatial data related to Israeli military activity in the Gaza Strip providing up-to-date spatial inputs requested by international humanitarian NGOs, Gazan residents, and the media. .[1]

[1] These can be found here:

- Garb, Yaakov, 2023, "Geospatial dataset of Gaza targeting polygons publicized by the IDF on December 1, 2023" https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/0HUXOJ , Harvard Dataverse, V2
- Garb, Yaakov, 2024, "Geospatial dataset and analysis of usability for emergency communications of the official maps of Gaza "Humanitarian Area" and evacuation blocks", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/9CRVCJ, Harvard Dataverse, V2
- Garb, Yaakov, 2024, "Geospatial dataset of northern Gaza evacuation scheme "superblocks" announced by Israeli army on October 6, 2024", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/AHOYNG, Harvard Dataverse, V1
- Garb, Yaakov, 2025, "Geospatial dataset of Gaza ceasefire "buffer zone" and COGAT entry coordination "red line" of January-February 2025", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/5KJV6Z, Harvard Dataverse, V1
- Garb, Yaakov, 2025, "Geospatial dataset (polygon) of extensive IDF Gaza evacuation order of March 18, 2025", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/F4EBGM, Harvard Dataverse, V2
- Garb, Yaakov, 2025, "Geospatial dataset (polygon) of extensive IDF Gaza evacuation order of March 18, 2025", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/F4EBGM, Harvard Dataverse, DRAFT VERSION

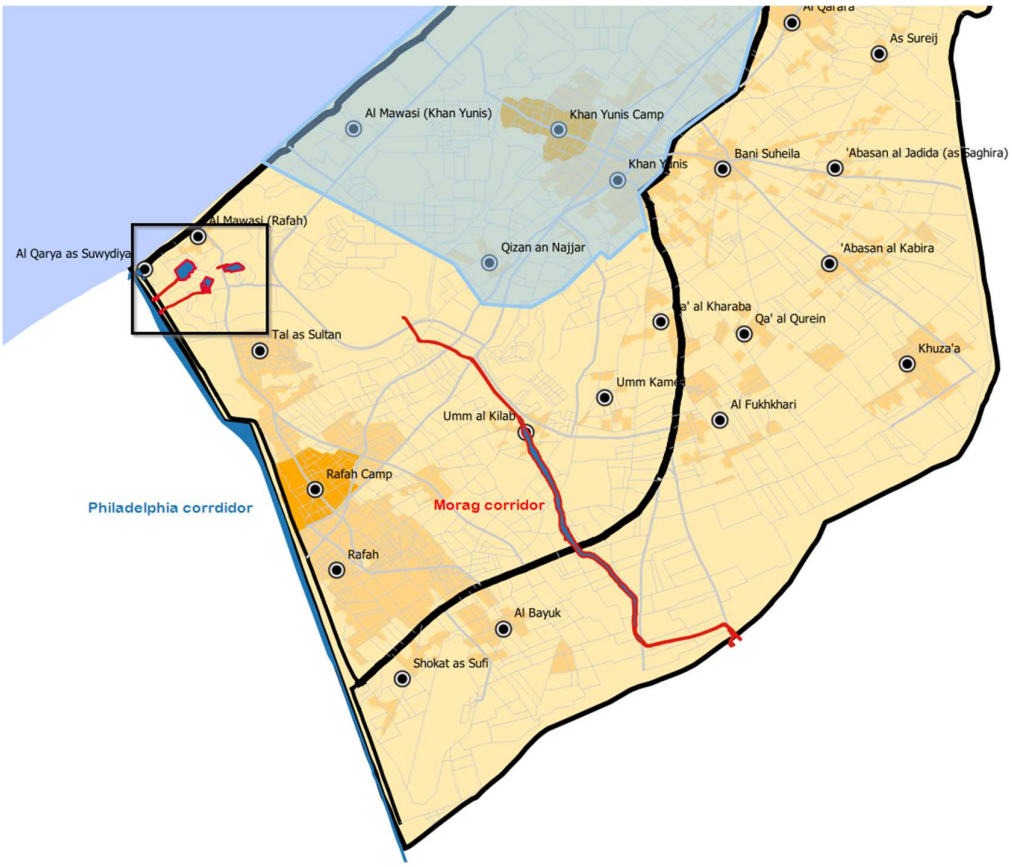

Figure 1: overview of southern Gaza and the detailed area (inset)

Map sources: vector layer of military compounds and roads (available for download) traced from PLANET satellite imagery. Pre-war communities and roads from OCHA maps. "Humanitarian" area (light blue) is from July 2024 army announcement, available from Garb, 2024, https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/9CRVCJ.

Key elements of this new post-ceasefire phase are:

(1) Clearing of the Morag corridor and construction of a main road (see Figure 1) as a "new Philadelphia corridor" north of the Philadelphia corridor, bisecting Gaza in the same manner as the Netzarim corridor, south of Gaza City. This began in earnest in the first week of April, with close to 10 km of road and protective berm cleared, leveled, and constructed in the following month.

(2) Extension on March 18 of the IDF buffer zone far beyond the 1 km buffer zone that was part of the ceasefire agreement that prevailed from January 19 to March 18, 2025, and,

- Garb, Yaakov, 2025, "Geospatial dataset : "orange line" no-go/coordination delineation (a modification of the extensive Gaza buffer zone declared by the IDF on March 18)", https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/QTNCPD, Harvard Dataverse, V1

shortly thereafter, an extension of the "coordination required" warning line for humanitarian agencies (see Figure 3 below).

(3) Extensive renewed bombing and evacuation orders, and, beginning on March 23, large evacuations of southern Gazan populations, including a wholesale evacuation order of March 31 (see Figure 2 below).

(4) A recent (May 5) updating of the IDF "coordination required" from 1-2 km southwest of the Morag corridor road to 2 km northeast of it (see figure below), which now includes the Morag corridor.

(5) Extensive systematic destruction (or re-destruction) of buildings in large swathes of area around and south of this corridor.

(6) The formal disappearance of the old "Humanitarian Area" and declarations of a "new humanitarian area" south of the Morag corridor.

(7) Explicit discussion of massive relocations of additional Gazan populations to this new southern area, under a regime of sorting and separation of the people allowed to passage, and, possibly, onwards from there to outside of Gaza, in the "voluntary" expulsion scenarios voiced by Trump and explicitly endorsed by Israeli officials.

(8) The cessation (or considerable reduction) of the entry of food and aid into Gaza, and Israeli government declarations that distribution will be henceforth be done directly by Israel in controlled access area, to designated vetted individuals, by private security companies.

Figure 2: Israeli army spokesman evacuation warning of 31 March, 2025

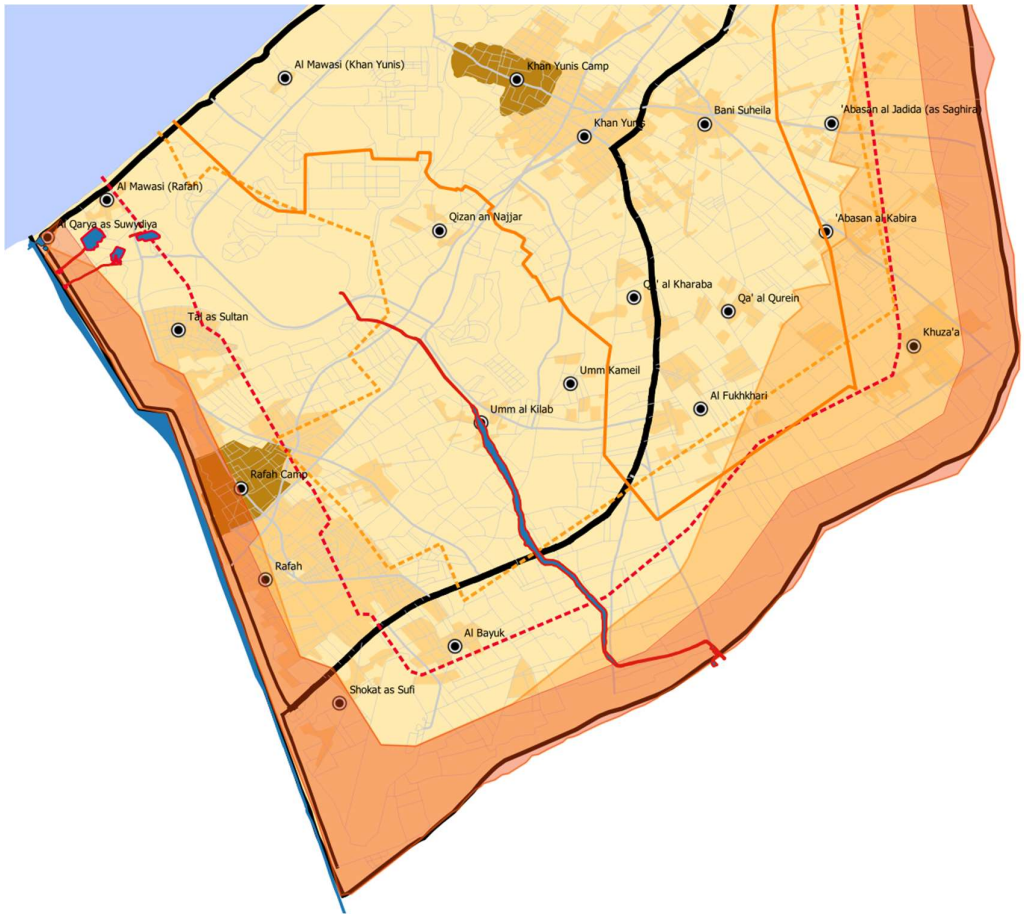

Figure 3: relation of new army infrastructures to buffer and "coordination required" warning lines

Outer reddish shaded area of ~1 km is the buffer area held by Israel during the ceasefire from January 19 to March 18, and the dashed red line is the "coordination required" warning line during this period. The broader orange area is the expanded buffer area declared at the end of the ceasefire, and the dashed orange line is the "coordination required" warning line declared shortly after this expansion. The solid orange line, announced on May 5, is the update of this dashed orange warning line, and now inclusive of a band approximately 2 km north of the Morag corridor road.

Map sources: vector layer of military compounds and roads (available for download) traced from PLANET satellite imagery. Pre-war communities and roads from OCHA maps. Buffer and coordination zones from Garb, 2025, available from https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/QTNCPD and https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/5KJV6Z.

In addition to the very intensive 10 km or road construction and the broadscale systematic demolition of buildings, there is an additional very intensive recent area of activity in the southwest corner of the Gaza Strip, between Tal as Sultan and the sea, shown in Figure 4 below.

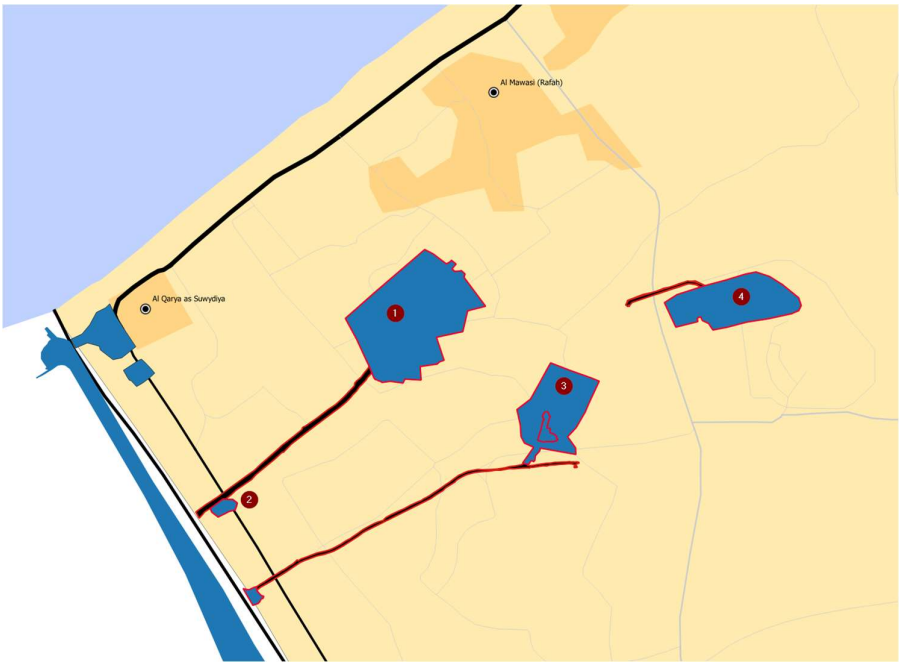

Figure 4: inset area from main map, showing the new compound (#1) and surrounding developments

Here, beginning in mid-April 2025, extensive work began in preparing a large 81 dunam (81,000 m^2) area at the site labelled 1. This has progressed rapidly since, then, with up to almost 30 clearance vehicles (apparently bulldozers and graders) sometimes visible at work leveling the site simultaneously. The rapid progress and the high level of clearance and leveling, the new access road, and the strategic positioning of this compound all suggest it is intended to take on a significant role in the intended next phase, possibly related to aid distribution and population sorting and separation.

This plot of area 1 contained greenhouses, agricultural buildings, and houses prior to the Oct. 7 war (). The site housed refugee tens in January of 2024, which were abandoned together with destruction of the greenhouses, and then, in the course of the year the destruction and abandonment of the buildings. and then was Despite a single shell crater in a field in the southern part on Jan 15, 2024, and then several more between June and September, the site was more or less intact, but then otherwise things till intact until Sept. 2024. It was leveled over the course of April 2025, with full scale clearance underway by April 21, at the same time as the clearance of a smaller logistics area (2) and approach road.

Figure 5: inset area overlaid on prewar satellite imagery (Bing satellite Maps)

Area 3 was a mosque, and, adjacent to which a cluster of high rise buildings was erected some time after 2021.

Figure 6: object 3 of inset area overlaid on prewar satellite imagery (Bing satellite Maps)

The mosque was demolished during the war, but the buildings remained. The entire courtyard housed a major refugee area in January, 2024, which was abandoned. It subsequently seems to have been pressed into use as an army headquarters, judging by the protective mounds, military vehicles parked outside, and the upgrading of the connective road towards the Philadelphia corridor.

Area 4 was open space and agriculture during the war, then housed refugee tents, which was then cleared, the agriculture abandoned, and some leveling has taken place. The clearing of the access road after the end of the ceasefire, and its location with respect to the road and other features, suggests it should also be monitored as part of the overall configuration of this area.

Figure 7: object 4 of inset area overlaid on prewar satellite imagery (Bing satellite Maps)