

The background of the document is a faded, high-angle photograph of a city, likely Gaza, showing a dense urban area with many buildings. In the upper right corner, the words "FREE PALESTINE" are written in a large, spaced-out, sans-serif font, appearing as if they are floating or overlaid on the image. The INU logo is positioned in the top left corner.

INU

Istituto Nazionale
di Urbanistica

MANIFESTO FOR GAZA

The "New Gaza" project, unveiled during the World Economic Forum in Davos, embodies with astonishing precision everything we have always believed should be avoided when endeavouring to regenerate a devastated territory from the ruins of the cities that once flourished there.

The Gaza Strip covers an area of just 362 square kilometres and has a population of over 2 million. The three largest cities — Gaza, Khan Younis and Rafah — are estimated to be 70% destroyed and together had a population of over 1.1 million.

So, the plan is to rebuild a city that would be the third most populous in Italy.

The real estate solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is being presented with such impudence that an appropriate answer is required.

For now, the project is little more than a generic marketing communication, perhaps intended to gauge the availability of potential investors. Nevertheless, it clearly demonstrates its intentions and essential content.

The reconstruction of Gaza is a gigantic financial operation with the aim of extracting the greatest possible revenue from a territory reduced to an immense tabula rasa, devoid of buildings, inhabitants, and even their memory.

The sole recognised value of this territory is the approximately forty-kilometre-long beach, on which buildings designed for the highest levels of international tourism will rise, representing, according to the proponents, an extraordinary opportunity for investors targeting the entertainment and second-home markets. The same "style" of building that can be found in Miami, Las Vegas, or Dubai is replicated here, with the historical roots and culture of this territory being disregarded, and the needs and aspirations of its legitimate residents being overlooked.

The glossy commercial renderings alone make it clear that nothing that previously existed is destined to survive this new devastation. The project makes no reference to the millennia-old history of cities, the rebuilding of communities, the re-establishment of local identities or environmental values; everything will be subordinated to the interests of a global society that is indifferent to and disconnected from the places it frequents for business or pleasure.

We are aware that the reconstruction of Gaza must be based on solid statutory decisions that can guarantee respect for rules and rights, including property rights, within a governance system that has yet to be defined. Ultimately, this can only be a two-state system in which the states recognise each other and collaborate on the reconstruction process.

Europe can offer ideas and methods for managing cities, knowledge, experience, and technical and disciplinary expertise, which are trained and tested, thus also contributing to the consolidation of peace on one of the most tormented stretches of our Mediterranean coast.

It is essential that the political forces and nations involved converge on a reconstruction proposal that is primarily embraced by the local population. The development of this proposal is a political task for Europe, but also a cultural commitment to which we must contribute.

Those who, like the Italian Institute for Urbanism INU, believe in the might of democracy and culture rather than the power of finance, hope that our government will propose the creation of an international organisation that merges institutional, cultural, social, and economic representatives eager to participate in developing the Gaza Strip project.