



CSIS COMMENTARIES

CSIS Commentaries is a platform where policy researchers and analysts can present their timely analysis on various strategic issues of interest, from economics, domestic political to regional affairs. This commentaries serves as a medium for experts to disseminate knowledge and share perspectives in two languages – Bahasa Indonesia and English, enabling a diverse readership to engage with the content. Analyses presented in CSIS Commentaries represent the views of the author(s) and not the institutions they are affiliated with or CSIS Indonesia. Please contact the editorial team for any enquiries at publication@csis.or.id

CSIS Commentaries CSISCOM00326

February 20th, 2026

Indonesia & the Board of Peace: Promises and Realities

Farhan Julianto

Master's Candidate of Public and International Law, University of Melbourne

The Board of Peace will convene its inaugural meeting on February 19th. The Board, which the U.S. President, Donald Trump, claims as an “international organization” was set to become a new international peacebuilding body with Gaza as its first ‘peace project’. Several member states were invited to join the Board, but only a handful eventually joined and became the founding members. One of those founding members is Indonesia. President Prabowo’s decision to join the Board has received domestic backlash, with some writings already highlighting the normative and political concerns, the ‘family company’ structure of the Board, and the empty slogans for Palestinian independence.¹

¹ See: Lina Alexandra and Pieter Pandie, “Indonesia and the Board of Peace: Another Unnecessary Mistep,” *The Jakarta Post*, 24 January 2026, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2026/01/24/indonesia-and-the-board-of-peace-another-unnecessary-misstep.html>; Rizal Sukma, “Trump’s Board of Peace is Problematic,” *The Jakarta Post*, 25 January 2026, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2026/01/26/trumps-board-of-peace-is-problematic.html>; Muhammad Zulfikar Rakhmat, “Prabowo Does Not Care About Palestine,” *Middle East*

To calm domestic constituents, Prabowo and his Foreign Minister, Sugiono, held consultation meetings with the House of Representatives, Islamic groups, and foreign policy observers, including former officials.² From these meetings, two main promises have emerged from the administration.

First, in relation to the US\$ 1bn dollars membership fee, the administration said that Indonesia has not paid the fee as it was meant only for permanent members.³ Controversies regarding the fee came at a time when the country was facing economic difficulties and was recovering from disasters. Allocating such a substantial sum to an institutional membership is excessive, as it would have required redirecting public funds from programs and agencies that give direct impact on society. For context, this membership fee is around 30 times the initial annual funds of the Disaster Management Agency for 2026⁴ and around the same amount as the social assistance funds disbursed ahead of Eid.⁵

Secondly, the administration also said that Indonesia will be substantially engaged and will be ready to withdraw if the ultimate goal of Palestinian independence is not achieved.⁶ This argument is very vague in practice. It is unclear how Indonesia can substantiate Indonesia's involvement within the Board. The Board has a centralized structure around the Chairman, who is Donald Trump. The Chairman determines membership, solves a dispute, and appoints Executive Board members.⁷ Agenda-setting on the Board can only be done by the Executive Board, which is also selected by the Chairman.⁸ Member states were only given the right to "comment" on the agenda without a veto right to disagree or present a counter proposal.⁹

The only available avenue for Indonesia to contribute substantially within the Board is to build a coalition with like-minded states and participate in non-voting meetings, which, according

Monitor, 24 January 2026, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20260124-prabowo-does-not-care-about-palestine/>.

² Arie Novarina, "Prabowo Invites Islamic Groups to Discuss Gaza Peace Board Membership," *Antara*, 3 February 2026, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/402666/prabowo-invites-islamic-groups-to-discuss-gaza-peace-board-membership>; Ervana Trikarinaputri, "Former Indonesian Foreign Ministers Meet Prabowo to Discuss Foreign Policy," *TEMPO*, 4 February 2026, <https://en.tempo.co/read/2085011/former-indonesian-foreign-ministers-meet-prabowo-to-discuss-foreign-policy>.

³ Ervana Trikarinaputri, "Indonesia: US\$1bn 'Voluntary' Board of Peace Fee to Fund Gaza Reconstruction," *TEMPO*, 27 January 2026, <https://en.tempo.co/read/2083321/indonesia-us1bn-voluntary-board-of-peace-fee-to-fund-gaza-reconstruction>

⁴ Assuming that US\$1bn equates to at least Rp15tn; Titis Anisa Fauziyah, and Vachri Rinaldy Lutfipambudi, "Anggaran BNPB 2026 Dipangkas Jadi Rp 491 Miliar, DPR RI: Ini Kecil Sekali", *Kompascom*, 22 January 2026, <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2026/01/22/203010378/anggaran-bnpb-2026-dipangkas-jadi-rp-491-miliar-dpr-ri-ini-kecil-sekali>

⁵ Ilona Estherina, "Indonesia to Distribute Rp17tn in Aid Ahead of Eid al-Fitr" *Tempo*, 11 February 2026, <https://en.tempo.co/read/2086579/indonesia-to-distribute-rp17tn-in-aid-ahead-of-eid-al-fitr>

⁶ "Cabinet Secretary: President Prabowo's Diplomacy Focuses on Results for National Interests", *Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia*, 5 February 2026, https://setkab.go.id/en/cabinet-secretary-president-prabowos-diplomacy-focuses-on-results-for-national-interests/?TSPD_101_R0=08978305a1ab2000c6999c8da5db1e86e041dac81f59cd86d786ae684c51552d5e45bd6f5685f49e08917d30f21430000fdeb71c025a3f60e72ef6c15b744751985bc48ec538f19a2ef024f0d860508eeabfc49f1d01cda85763968b0608f95e

⁷ Board of Peace, *Charter of the Board of Peace* (agreed on January 22nd 2026), article 2.1, 4.1(a), and 7.

⁸ *Ibid*, article 4.1(a).

⁹ *Ibid*, article 3.1(c).

to the Charter, member states may present recommendations for the Executive Board.¹⁰ However, the Executive Board does not have to comply with the recommendations, as the agenda will be subject to a vote and approval from the Chairman. Hence, even if Indonesia's recommendation was accepted and voted on, it still needs to convince Trump for the Board to adopt it. Looking at the stated objective of Palestinian independence, unless Indonesia can somehow convince Trump that a Palestinian independence fit with his idea of 'New Gaza' and is achievable without precondition, Indonesia would realistically be unable to influence the Board in a meaningful way.

Thirdly, membership on the Board was seen as a platform for President Prabowo's intent to contribute to the International Stabilization Force (ISF). The ISF, legally speaking, has obtained the approval of the UN Security Council¹¹ and, hence, does not violate the use of force norms within the multilateral framework. However, legal entitlement does not equate with normative justification. We must critically question how sending thousands of troops will contribute to Palestinian independence – the ultimate goal stated by Indonesian policymakers – especially since the Board did not refer to it. Moreover, there are also questions on how the public will react, as there is a legal obligation that the ISF will be in close coordination with the Israelis.¹²

Is Indonesia at risk of violating international law?

Indonesia could also violate its own legal responsibility by joining the Board. I would like to refer to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion, since, although it is not binding, it is very persuasive in clarifying legal obligations and carries great legal weight and moral authority.¹³ In its advisory opinion, the Court states that Israel is an occupying power in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and must comply with its duties under international humanitarian law.¹⁴ Those duties include the obligation not to make permanent changes to the territory, including respect for cultural sites, and that the occupation must remain temporary.¹⁵ Other states also have a legal responsibility not to recognize the occupation as a lawful situation and must not render assistance in maintaining that unlawfulness.

Assistance to an internationally wrongful act has been regulated in international law. Under the International Law Commission's Articles on State Responsibility, a state can be said to be assisting another state's unlawful acts if the state knowingly and with awareness assists the unlawful conduct.¹⁶ The assistance is not merely a political support, but must be sufficiently

¹⁰ Ibid, article 3.1(f).

¹¹ UN Security Council, 2803 (2025), UN Doc. S/RES/2803 (2025), [7].

¹² Ibid

¹³ Vahid Rezadoost, "Unveiling the 'author' of International Law – The 'Legal Effect' of ICJ's Advisory Opinions" *Journal of International Dispute Settlement* 15(4), 2024, 506-33.

¹⁴ International Court of Justice, *Legal Consequences Arising From the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Including East Jerusalem*, Advisory Opinion, 19 July 2024, [87], [96], [272].

¹⁵ Ibid, [106], [159].

¹⁶ International Law Commission, *Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts* (adopted In 2021), Article 16

linked to the wrongful act. This has been applied in the ICJ's case of *Bosnia and Herzegovina v Serbia and Montenegro*.¹⁷

In my view, the Board of Peace could potentially violate international humanitarian law through its 'redevelopment' plan for Gaza and the West Bank. Firstly, the redevelopment plan would likely change land ownership, as the Palestinians' lands will be converted into tourism areas, among others. The plan will also delete some sites with cultural significance, including the Old Gaza City.¹⁸ This will be a *prima facie* violation of the Hague Regulations, which prohibits confiscation of private property and the alteration of the property substantially, even when Israel is not a party to the treaty.¹⁹ Furthermore, there are also questions about whether this redevelopment serves the benefit of Palestinians when they are not involved in the Board. Reconstruction projects can only be lawful if genuinely aimed at the benefit of the population, not converted for business or personal purposes.²⁰

Most importantly, bypassing Palestinians in the governance of the Occupied Territory would seriously harm the right of self-determination under international law. Self-determination puts emphasis on the people's right to freely determine their political status and development.²¹ The right to self-determination is an obligation *erga omnes*, meaning that all states have a legal interest to protect it.²² The prolonged occupation in the Territory has undermined Palestinians' right to self-determination. The Board, however, worsens the condition by not involving Palestinians in the forum at all. In fact, there is a very low chance that Palestinians will ever get invited into the Board since membership is an invitation-only by Trump,²³ and the fact that the treaty was deposited in the United States.²⁴

¹⁷ International Court of Justice (ICJ), *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro)*, Judgment, February 26, 2007, I.C.J. Reports 2007, 43, [420] – [422].

¹⁸ Mohammed Haddad and Mohammed Mansour, "Map Shows What Would Happen to Gaza Under the US 'Master Plan,'" *Al Jazeera*, 27 January 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/1/27/map-shows-what-would-happen-to-gaza-under-the-us-master-plan>

¹⁹ In its advisory opinion, the ICJ confirmed that the Hague Regulations were part of customary international law, and therefore, binding upon all states. Israel, in this case, violate Article 46 of the 1907 Hague Regulation. See: International Court of Justice, *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004, p. 136 (July 9, 2004), [89]; Convention (IV) Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and Its Annex: Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, art. 46, Oct. 18, 1907, 36 Stat. 2277, 1 Bevans 631.

²⁰ *Ibid*, art 43.

²¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, art 1(1)

²² In *Barcelona Traction*, the ICJ established the concept *erga omnes* obligations, meaning obligations owed to the international community. In *East Timor*, the ICJ affirms that self-determination is an obligation *erga omnes*. See: International Court of Justice, *Barcelona Traction, Light and Power Company, Limited (Belgium v. Spain)*, Second Phase, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1970, 3, [33]; International Court of Justice, *East Timor (Portugal v. Australia)*, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 1995, 90, [29]

²³ Board of Peace, *Charter of the Board of Peace*, article 2.1.

²⁴ Per Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT) article 6, only a "State" possesses capacity to conclude treaties. The U.S. does not recognize Palestine to be a state, and therefore, could bring an argument that it can not enter the Board of Peace. It will be a different case if the treaty is deposited at the UN Secretary-General since according to UNGA Resolution 67/19, Palestine can be treated as a state for UN purposes and, therefore, could enter a treaty under the UN. This is applicable in, for instance, Palestine's accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Assuming that the Board violates international humanitarian law, Indonesia can also be said to be assisting those violations. This is especially true if Indonesia has contributed and participated materially, either by paying the necessary fees or by sending boots on the ground to secure the redevelopment projects. Even if Indonesia does not pay the fees and cancels its participation in the ISF, being associated with violators could harm Indonesia's reputation and credibility, especially as a country that constantly claimed champions multilateralism. Domestically, it can also harm the reputation of the administration, especially with Indonesia's historical ties with the Palestinians' struggle for independence.

Any Way Forward Left?

There is little use in dwelling on past decisions; Indonesia must now be decisive in determining its next steps. First and foremost, the Indonesian government should keep the option of withdrawal open. The withdrawal clause in the Charter is quite loose and can be utilized by Indonesia to submit a notice to the Chairman. While a withdrawal might harm Indonesia's credibility and might result in more political pressure from the United States, it is in line with Indonesia's legal obligations under international law and national interests.

Secondly, if it is a true multilateralist, as it is often said, Indonesia should allocate more efforts and actions to commit to multilateralism, rather than joining an exclusive Trump club. Multilateralism is not working as effectively as it should be, particularly on the Palestine issue. However, that failure was mostly caused by the same country that decided to create the exclusive club. For Indonesia, the UN-based mechanisms are still more appropriate since they provide more avenues for agenda-setting and the right to challenge even the most powerful country in the world, unlike the Board, which centers around the Chairman's discretion. Moreover, opting for an exclusive club can also signal a disrespect towards states that struggled to bring Palestine into the multilateral forum in the past.

From a reflective view, the abrupt accession to the Board also signals the weakening of the foreign policy suprastructure. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has failed multiple times recently in balancing the President's personalistic approach in foreign policy with compliance to international law and its effects internationally and domestically.²⁵ Moreover, we must also put an emphasis on the House of Representatives' role in constructively critiquing the executive. When the time comes, the House must critically scrutinize Indonesia's accession to the Board, as part of ratifying the Board's Charter. In the past, we have had a case where sensitive international issues could result in political pressure on the executive, especially when they went against domestic mainstream aspirations.²⁶

To conclude, I have interrogated two assurances provided by the government. First, on the financial issue, the political sensitivity of allocating significant funds to a controversial body highlighted the tension between diplomacy and domestic accountability. Secondly, on a

²⁵ Another recent example in the Prabowo Administration is the Joint Development Area Proposal in South China Sea where Indonesia accidentally recognized overlapping maritime claims with China. See: Aristyo Rizka Darmawan, "Prabowo's Flawed Logic on the Natuna Joint Development Proposal" *East Asia Forum*, 31 May 2025, <https://eastasiaforum.org/2025/05/31/prabowos-flawed-logic-on-the-natuna-joint-development-proposal/>

²⁶ As seen in the Iranian Nuclear Issue in 2007-8. See: Iis Gindarsah, "Indonesia's Democratic Politics and Foreign Policy-Making: A Case Study of Iranian Nuclear Issue, 2007-2008" *RSIS Working Paper* No. 236, 1-24.

substantial contribution, the centralistic structure of the Board severely limits Indonesia's engagement within the Board. Furthermore, Indonesia's aspiration to contribute to the ISF can be counterproductive to the relations with Palestine.

This article has also assessed the international legal risk. Indonesia's participation and involvement within the Board can be seen as an assistance towards unlawful conduct, especially if the Board materially supports Palestinian displacement through 'redevelopment projects'. To remedy this accession, Indonesia should opt for a withdrawal when possible. It should also re-center its diplomatic efforts within multilateral mechanisms and maintain constitutional accountability in foreign policy decision-making.

CSIS Indonesia, Pakarti Centre Building, Indonesia 10160

Tel: (62-21) 386 5532 | Fax: (6221) 384 7517 | csis.or.id

Please contact the editorial team for any enquiries at

publication@csis.or.id