



# Israel and Hamas renew talks in Qatar on hostages, Gaza cease-fire

## As IDF pounds Gaza, talks focus on two-month cease-fire ahead of permanent truce

Rawan Suleiman, Jack Khoury, Jonathan Lis, Bar Peleg and Linda Dayan

Israel and Hamas have begun indirect talks in Qatar to reach a cease-fire, following Israel's planned expansion of its Gaza offensive, Israeli and foreign officials confirmed to Haaretz on Saturday.

A Hamas senior official told Qatari news outlet Al-Araby al-Jadeed on Saturday that indirect talks with Israel have started recently in Doha, with discussions focused on a two-month cease-fire with subsequent negotiations for a permanent truce.

The U.S. and other mediators hoped that agreements would be reached between Hamas and Israel by the end of U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to the Middle East, which ended Friday. This, due to Israel's threat to significantly expand its ground operations in the Gaza Strip, if a deal was not reached by the end of the visit.

Now, after Trump's return to the United States, Israel is set to carry out the threat, and the parties' decision to return to the negotiating table, "without preconditions," as Hamas official Taher al-Nono told Reuters on Saturday, is intended to prevent this.

The official added that the United States will guarantee that the cease-fire stays in place if an agreement is reached, adding that the guarantees appear



Demonstrators in Tel Aviv on Saturday evening calling for the release of the hostages in Gaza.

Moti Milrod

more serious than those of previous talks.

Defense Minister Israel Katz, said on Saturday that Hamas' delegation in Doha said it would return to hostage deal negotiations,

without the "unnecessary" entry of aid to Gaza or a cease-fire.

A source involved in the negotiations said that while Hamas is, in fact, cooperating in the talks, the group

never really ended them.

According to Israeli and foreign sources, negotiations did not start last week because Hamas demanded guarantees to end the war. In contrast, Israel demand-

ed an immediate release of half the hostages, according to the outline proposed by U.S. Middle East Envoy Steve Witkoff.

Another Hamas source told Saudi news outlet al-

Sharq al-Awsat on Saturday that the organization is willing to sign a cease-fire "immediately" if Israel guarantees an end to the war and

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## To stop the operation in Gaza, Trump needs to not lose interest

On Friday, around the time that Donald Trump headed back home from Abu Dhabi, the Israel Defense Forces began expanding the ground operation in Gaza. Judging by the order of forces involved, this is not yet an operation to recapture the Gaza Strip. It's also not yet clear how much this move is being coordinated with the Trump administration and whether the U.S. president discussed a target date for its completion with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The heightened military pressure helped bring Hamas back to the negotiating table, but it doesn't necessarily guarantee rapid progress in the talks. The operation commenced as warnings of widespread hunger in Gaza grow and after hundreds of Palestinians, mostly civilians, were killed in the recent Israel Air Force bombings. The operation is expected to increase the risk to the lives of the soldiers and the hostages.

The airstrikes intensified in the middle of the week, with the aim of impairing Hamas' military capabilities and killing commanders in preparation for the start of the maneuver. The current move is in effect the beginning of what the IDF has dubbed Operation Gideon's Chariots. Within its framework, regular forces have begun to operate simultaneously – slowly, for now – in northern, central and southern Gaza.

The operational plan in the Gaza Strip has undergone many changes in recent months. When Eyal

Zamir took up his position as IDF chief of staff at the beginning of March, he presented to the government the possibility of a very extensive ground operation, involving six divisions, that would end Hamas' control of Gaza and include the occupation of the entire enclave. But in practice, the preparations currently underway are aimed at a more limited operation. Although the IDF sent call-up orders to tens of thousands of reservists in the past two weeks, only

## Stop the war in Gaza now

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a minority of them were directed to Gaza; the majority of the units were sent to the West Bank, the Syrian border and to Lebanon so as to allow regular forces to move south.

The families of the hostages have expressed grave concern in recent weeks over the decision to launch the new operation, with parents of hostages warning that it could put the lives of their children in extreme danger. Both Netanyahu and Trump said last week that of the 58 remaining hostages held by Hamas in Gaza, 20 are alive. The indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas, mediated by Qatar, resumed in Doha Saturday as the IDF operation in Gaza continued.

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Gazans at a community kitchen, Thursday. Abdel Kareem Hana/AP

## Food aid group: Can't reach most vulnerable Gazans

Haaretz

The Israel-backed organization responsible for distributing aid in Gaza has admitted that it will not be able to reach the most vulnerable residents of the Gaza Strip, The Guardian reported on Saturday.

"To provide all Gazans, including those that are infirm, immobile, or unwill-

ing to travel to a secure distribution site, with access to food aid, GHF will require aid distribution mechanisms that expand beyond the currently scoped model," stated the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a Swiss-registered organization led by a former U.S. Marine.

A person involved in GHF planning told The Guardian that the organization is in

"advanced discussions" with Israel regarding details of the plan and the timeline of its implementation. According to the British newspaper's report, Israeli military forces have already started preparing "sites that match descriptions of militarized aid hubs planned by GHF."

The Guardian reported that GHF has operated in secrecy since its inception.

Beyond its postal address, no public details are available, not even a website. Its communication about Gaza's humanitarian crisis has been reportedly "limited to two statements circulating online."

Notably, the fund "has tarnished its credentials" by listing the names of two well-known figures in the humanitarian world: for-

mer head of the World Food Program David Beasley and former CEO of World Central Kitchen Nathan Mook. However, according to The Guardian's report, both have told CNN that "they are currently not involved." GHF did not respond to The Guardian's requests for comments on this subject.

Even though according to the Guardian, Israel has not

officially laid out its plans for food distribution in the Gaza Strip, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee said last week that U.S. President Donald Trump ordered that humanitarian aid be brought into Gaza "as soon as possible," regardless of whether a cease-fire is reached between Israel

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## NBC: Trump team exploring plan to move million Gazans to Libya

Haaretz

The Trump administration is working on a plan to transfer 1 million Palestinians to Libya, in exchange for billions of dollars in aid funds that had been frozen, according to a report by NBC, citing five sources familiar with the matter.

Three sources noted that Israel is updated on the details and the talks that the U.S. government is holding with Libya, and that a final agreement on the plan and

its procedures has not yet been reached.

Libya, which has been in a continuous political crisis since the fall of Muammar Gadhafi in 2011, is currently controlled by two rival governments fighting each other. One, in the west of the country, led by Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh, and the other in the east, led by General Khalifa Haftar.

In the past, the U.S. State Department issued a travel warning for Libya, stating that it is a dangerous coun-

try to visit due to rampant crime waves, terrorist activities, including kidnappings, and ongoing armed conflict.

According to the sources, the U.S. government is also discussing incentives that could influence Palestinians to relocate to Libya. Measures such as free housing and stipends are being considered, but there is no concrete information on Gaza residents who have expressed a willingness to

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## Palestinians trapped inside a diplomatic 'Bermuda Triangle'

Jack Khoury

There are moments in which an entire history is condensed into a feeling of helplessness. That is the case for Palestinians at this juncture. The summit meetings arranged by U.S. President Donald Trump with the rulers of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates look like the pinnacle of a new era. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been invested in arms deals, in infrastruc-

ture and in economic agreements. Trump continues to play a central role in shaping a new, American Middle East, and his objective is to push aside China and reduce Iran's influence. But in all these immense investments and the new vision for the region, one issue has been excluded. No one prepared even a rudimentary outline for introducing humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip.

The Arab summit which opened in Baghdad on Saturday, like all other Arab League summits over the last two decades, continues the tradition of voicing empty slogans and clichés that are not translated into action. Representatives of Arab states do not propose an effective mechanism for pressuring Israel or for taking operative action against it. The Palestinian issue, which at least outwardly was once the center of Arab political

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## Heatwave breaks records

The hot weather is to continue into Sunday



Martin Meissner/AP

## Eurovision Song Contest update

Yuval Raphael of Israel is in the finals late Saturday

haaretz.com

## 'Victory or treason'

# What would 'victory' for Israel in the Gaza Strip really look like?

Anshel Pfeffer

On many streets in Israel's cities, the posters featuring the portraits of the hostages held in Gaza, which have been such a feature of our lives over the past 18 months, have been replaced by similar posters of young Israelis – with a subtle difference. Instead of the red-lettered cry for the immediate return of the hostages, a short slogan appears beneath the smiling faces in white letters on a blue background: "Until Victory!"

These are portraits of young soldiers killed in Gaza on October 7 and in the 19 months of fighting since. They were plastered on the walls by a group called Forum HaGvura ("the Heroism Forum"), a group of bereaved parents who oppose a cease-fire in Gaza, instead demanding to continue the war "until victory."

It's not always well-defined. For Forum HaGvura and similar groups, it echoes Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vague "Total Victory" slo-



Israeli troops during an operation in the Gaza Strip.

Israel Defense Forces/AFP

gan. After all, he often meets with their delegations, and figures close to him have helped found and finance these groups. For others within this camp, it is the more explicit vision of Netanyahu's far-right and messianic partners – like Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich – to destroy all of the Gaza Strip

and cleanse it of its population as a prelude to annexation and settlement.

What is clear to them is what victory is not. It's not ending the war in a cease-fire agreement of any form with Hamas. Victory must be nothing short of unconditional surrender by Hamas. For some, even that isn't enough. In their eyes, victo-

ry is Hamas, and preferably every building and person in Gaza, wiped off the face of the earth.

This definition of victory has one undeniable virtue: it works as a slogan. It's easily marketable to a public still suffering from the trauma of October 7. Though if polls

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