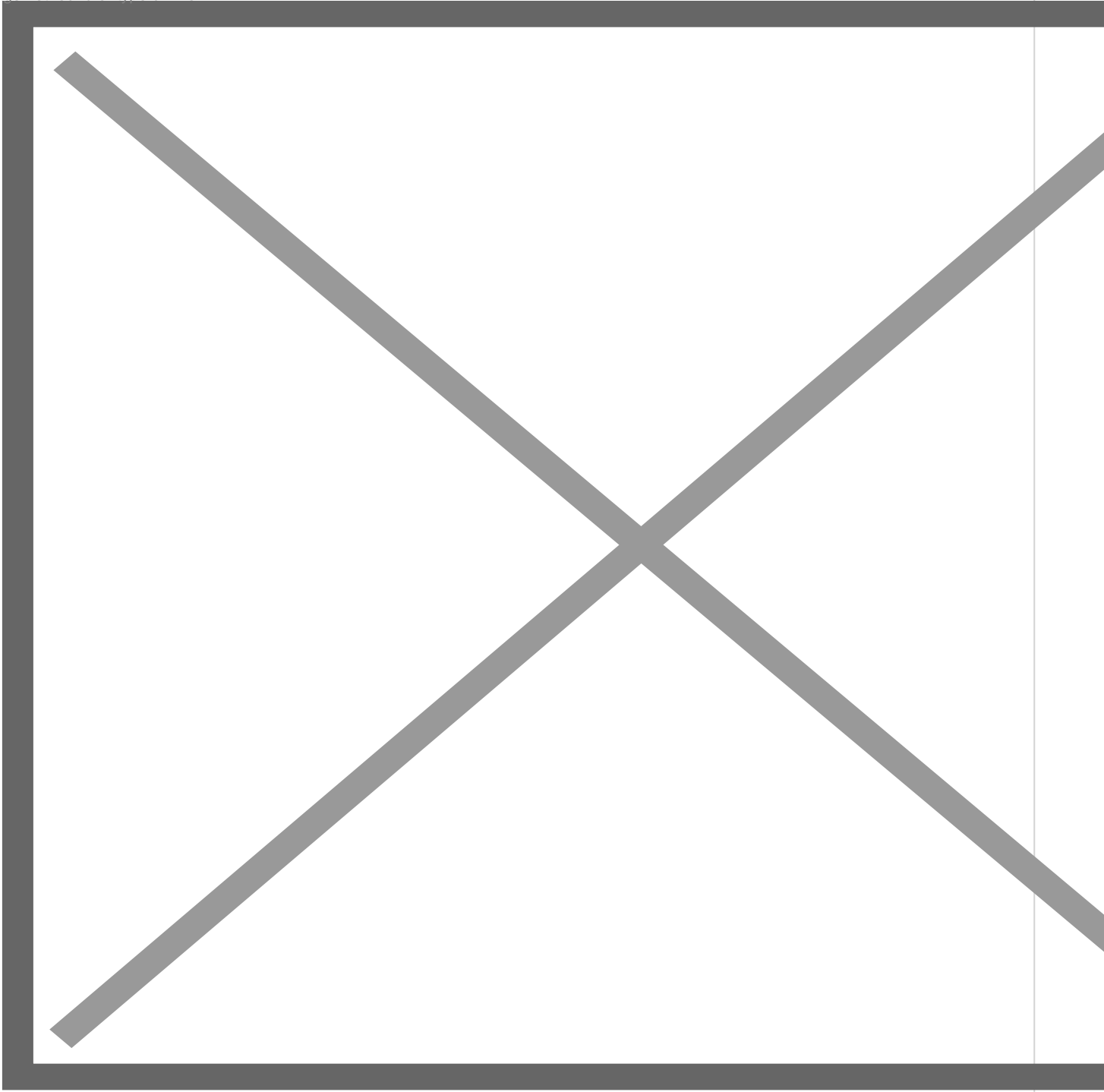


Israel and Hamas agree to Gaza ceasefire

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**Smoke billows from the the area around the port of Gaza City following Israeli bombardment
[File: Mahmud Hams/AFP]**

Gaza City, May 20 (RHC)-- Israel and Hamas have agreed to a ceasefire as of 2 a.m. on Friday (2300 GMT Thursday), an official with the Palestinian group said, bringing a potentially tenuous halt to 11 days of fighting.

Israel's security cabinet said it had voted unanimously in favor of a "mutual and unconditional" Gaza truce proposed by mediator Egypt, but added that the hour of implementation had yet to be agreed.

The development came a day after U.S. President Joe Biden urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to seek de-escalation, and amid mediation bids by Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations.

Hamas, the group which rules Gaza, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) armed group confirmed the ceasefire in a statement.

Earlier on Thursday, Israel had resumed its bombardment of the besieged Gaza Strip and rocket attacks by Hamas and allied PIJ had resumed after an eight-hour pause.

Since the violence erupted on May 10, health officials in Gaza say 232 Palestinians, including 65 children and 39 women, have been killed and more than 1,900 wounded in aerial bombardments. Israel has said it has killed at least 160 combatants in Gaza, without providing evidence.

Authorities put the death toll in Israel at 12, with hundreds of people treated for injuries in rocket attacks that have caused panic and sent people rushing into shelters.

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