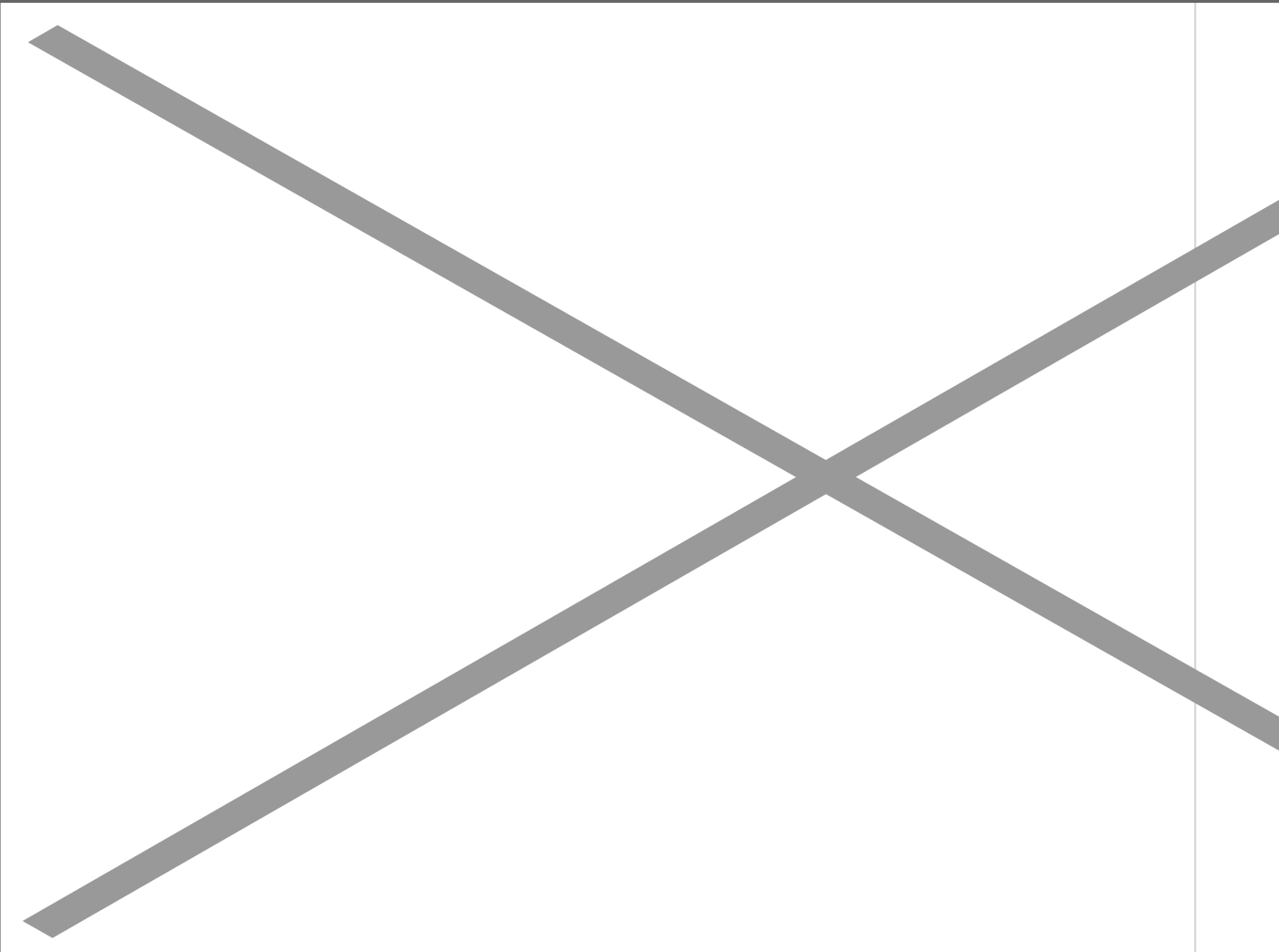


# *Hamas chief affirms Israel responsible for lack of progress in ceasefire talks*

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Ismail Haniyeh, political chief of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas

Beirut, February 18 (RHC)-- The head of the political bureau of Hamas has blamed the Israeli regime for the lack of progress in achieving a ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, as the occupying regime is going on with its relentless bombardments of the besieged territory.

Ismail Haniyeh made the remarks in a statement on Saturday, after talks on a prisoner exchange and a truce deal reached an impasse. "The resistance will not be satisfied with anything less than a complete cessation of aggression, the withdrawal of the occupying army from Gaza, and the lifting of the oppressive siege," Haniyeh said.

He further noted that Hamas will act responsibly in negotiations and will not ignore the sacrifices and achievements of the resistance, stressing that establishing a prisoner exchange deal under which old prisoners will be released is one of the goals of the negotiations.

The Hamas chief also emphasized that the resistance group will use all means to stop the Israeli regime's bloodshed against the defenseless Palestinian nation.

Ismail Haniyeh is due in the Egyptian capital of Cairo for talks on a new ceasefire proposal put forward by senior Qatari and Egyptian officials during recent meetings in France. Multi-party negotiations on hammering out a truce agreement between Hamas and the Israeli regime reportedly failed to yield any results.

The American news website Axios cited an unnamed Israeli official as saying that the talks involving the United States, Egypt, Israel, and Qatar on a ceasefire deal, which also included an agreement on the release of captives, ended "without a breakthrough" on Tuesday.

Citing Egyptian officials, the Wall Street Journal also said the Israeli delegation had departed the Egyptian capital "without closing any of the major gaps in the negotiations." A senior Egyptian official said that despite the Israeli delegation's departure, the negotiations were "positive" and would continue for three more days.

A Hamas official was reported as saying that the resistance movement was waiting for the outcome of the Cairo meeting, but was "open to discussing any initiative that achieves an end to aggression and war."

Israel waged the brutal war on Gaza on October 7 after Hamas-led Palestinian resistance groups carried out a historic operation against the occupying entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people.

So far, the Zionist regime has killed over 28,700 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 68,146 others.

About 130 of the 250 Israeli captives taken by Hamas during the October 7 operation are still in Gaza after a provisional truce deal in December saw the exchange of prisoners between the two sides.

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