

Gaza ceasefire talks end with no deal as Israel ramps up Rafah attacks

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A woman in Rafah hugs her dead son, killed in an Israeli attack, saying goodbye as she cries.

Cairo, May 10 (RHC)-- The Israeli and Hamas delegations have left the Egyptian capital, Cairo, after the latest round of ceasefire talks, mediated by Qatar, the United States and Egypt. Palestinian group Hamas

said on Friday that the “ball is now completely” in Israel’s hands.

Egypt’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the two sides must show “flexibility” in order to strike a deal for a ceasefire and an exchange of captives being held in Gaza for Palestinian prisoners.

Hamas said a deal would involve a withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, the return of Palestinians displaced by the war, and captives-for-prisoners swap, with the aim of a “permanent ceasefire”. The group said it stood by the terms and that Israel had “raised objections to it on several central issues.”

Hamas’s demand for an initial 12-week pause in fighting was a major sticking point for Israel during this week’s ceasefire negotiations, broadcaster CNN reported, citing three sources familiar with the talks.

Israel is determined to press ahead with its offensive on Rafah, where 1.4 million displaced Palestinians were sheltering, in defiance of warnings from the UN and its allies, including its key military and political backer, the United States.

While U.S. President Joe Biden warned that he would stop some U.S. weapons supplies to Israel if it carried out the ground assault, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remained defiant. “If we have to stand alone, we will stand alone. If we need to, we will fight with our fingernails. But we have much more than fingernails,” he said, with a smile, in an interview on Thursday.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is expected to submit a report to Congress later on Friday on Israel’s conduct in Gaza, which stops short of concluding that the country has violated the terms for its use of U.S. weapons, media outlet Axios reported.

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