

*Israel vows to continue its
genocidal war against Gaza after
UN Security Council ceasefire
proposal*



United Nations, June 11 (RHC)-- Israel has vowed to persist with its military operation in Gaza, saying it won't engage in "meaningless" negotiations with Hamas, shortly after the United Nations Security Council overwhelmingly approved a U.S.-backed ceasefire plan intended to bring an end to the eight-month war.

Israel's representative to the UN, Reut Shapir Ben-Naftaly, emphasized at a UNSC meeting Monday that her country wants to "ensure that Gaza doesn't pose a threat to Israel in the future."

The senior diplomat said the war would not end until all hostages were returned and Hamas' capabilities were "dismantled," accusing the Palestinian militant group of using "endless negotiations... as a means to stall for time."

Her comments came after 14 of the 15 UNSC council members voted in favor of Monday's U.S.-drafted resolution, with only Russia abstaining – the first time the council has endorsed such a plan to end the war. Israel is not a member of the UNSC, and so did not vote.

The comprehensive three-stage peace deal, which sets out conditions intended to lead to the eventual release of all remaining hostages, in return for a permanent ceasefire and withdrawal of Israeli forces, was first laid out by US President Joe Biden on May 31.

The landmark vote means the UNSC now joins other major global bodies in backing the plan, increasing international pressure on both Hamas and Israel to end the conflict.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on a diplomatic trip to the Middle East, said Tuesday that in a meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the Israeli leader "reaffirmed his commitment" to the current proposal to secure a ceasefire and hostage release, which is still awaiting an answer from Hamas.

Hamas leader says 'we have the Israelis right where we want them' in leaked messages, WSJ reports
Blinken said that he got an explicit assurance from Netanyahu that he continues to support the deal, and will accept it if Hamas agrees to what is on the table.

Netanyahu has repeatedly and publicly said that his country will press on with the war in Gaza until Hamas is destroyed and the hostages are freed. But an Israeli statement on Tuesday indicated it was poised to formally sign up to the three-stage ceasefire plan for Gaza, while at the same time maintaining the freedom to keep fighting.

The short communication, attributed only to an Israeli government official, started with an assertion of Israel's war aims before expressing support for the US proposal currently on the table.

"Israel will not end the war before achieving all its war objectives: destroying Hamas's military and governing capabilities, freeing all the hostages and ensuring Gaza doesn't pose a threat to Israel in the future," it said.

"The proposal presented enables Israel to achieve these goals and Israel will indeed do so," the statement concluded.

Hamas welcomed the adoption of the UNSC resolution, saying in a statement it was ready to engage with mediators to implement measures such as the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, prisoner exchange, returning residents to their homes and the "rejection of any demographic change or reduction in the area of the Gaza Strip."

The resolution says Israel has accepted the plan, and U.S. officials have repeatedly emphasized Israel had agreed to the proposal – despite other public comments from Netanyahu that suggest otherwise.

Even last month, less than an hour after Biden unveiled his proposal, Netanyahu insisted Israel would not end the war until Hamas is defeated.

The United States ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said Monday the US would guarantee Israel follows through with its obligations, while Egypt and Qatar would do the same with Hamas. "The fighting could stop today," if Hamas agreed to the deal, she said.

But detailed negotiations to implement its provisions are yet to yield agreement from both Israel and Hamas.

The deal is divided into three phases, according to Thomas-Greenfield. It includes an initial ceasefire, the release of Israeli hostages and the exchange of Palestinian prisoners, and ultimately a permanent end to hostilities and full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, as well as the effective distribution of aid and a major multiyear reconstruction in the strip. The ambassador also said the deal "rejects any geographical changes" in Gaza and reiterates the commitment for a two-state solution.

The Palestinian UN envoy Riyad Mansour said the Palestinian Authority – which governs the Israeli-occupied West Bank – welcomed the deal as a "step in the right direction," but said it was up to Israel to implement those measures. "We want a ceasefire," he said, adding the "burden is on the Israeli side to implement this resolution."

"The proof is in the pudding. We will see who are the ones who are interested to see this resolution to become a reality and those who are obstructing it and want to continue the war of genocide against our people," he added.

Ahead of the vote, Blinken told Netanyahu during their meeting in Jerusalem that the proposal would "unlock the possibility of calm along Israel's northern border and further integration with countries in the region," according to a State Department readout.

"The United States and other world leaders will stand behind" the proposal for a release of the hostages and an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, Blinken told Netanyahu.

After the resolution was adopted, Blinken spoke with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, where he "commended Israel's readiness to conclude a deal and affirmed that the onus is on Hamas to accept," according to a readout of their meeting.

Blinken arrived in Israel on Monday, following the resignation of Benny Gantz from the Israeli war cabinet on Sunday. Gantz's departure delivered a blow to Netanyahu, who is coming under increasing pressure from Western allies and families of hostages to end the war and bring back the captives.

Gantz stressed to Blinken in their meeting the importance of "applying maximum pressure" on negotiators to secure Hamas' agreement to the latest ceasefire plan and bring those being held in Gaza home, according to a statement from Gantz's office. It added that Gantz said his party would support "any responsible arrangement" on the matter from outside the government.

There has been confusion about whose proposal this is, however. Biden has called it an "Israeli proposal," but less than an hour after Biden announced the plan in May, Netanyahu said his country would not end the war until Hamas is defeated.

Biden has said Hamas has been degraded to a point where it can no longer carry out the type of attack, and that now "it's time for this war to end." The Israeli prime minister, however, is yet to publicly announce whether his country has accepted or rejected the US-drafted proposal.

Eight months since the war began, Israel is yet to achieve its stated objectives as most of Hamas' top leadership remains at large, while earlier this week, Israeli military officials estimated around 120

hostages remain captive, of which around 70 are thought to still be alive.

More than 37,000 people have been killed in Gaza since the war began, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza.

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