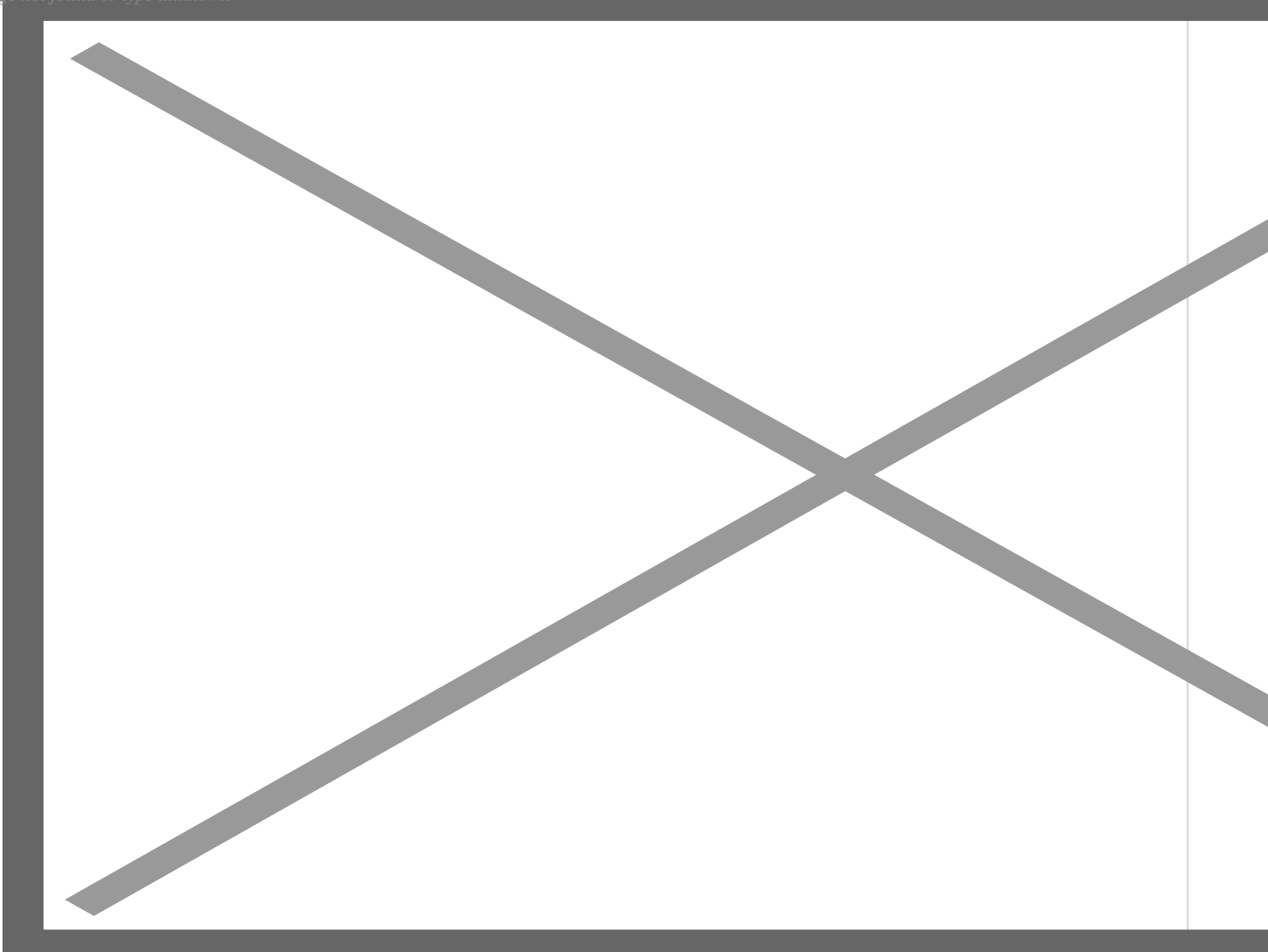


*Hamas insists ceasefire must  
involve complete Israeli  
withdrawal from Gaza*

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Gaza City, August 16 (RHC)-- The Islamic resistance movement Hamas has once again stressed that any agreement with Israel must ensure a comprehensive ceasefire in Gaza, the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces and a prisoner exchange deal.

The Palestinian resistance group said in a statement on Thursday that the agreement should also facilitate the return of the displaced Palestinians and the reconstruction of the devastated territory.

"Hamas views the ongoing negotiations in Doha regarding a ceasefire and prisoner exchange from a strategic perspective aimed at ending the aggression on Gaza, " Hamas official Hossam Badran said in the statement.

"Hamas believes that any negotiations must be based on a clear plan to implement what was previously agreed upon. The obstacle to reaching a ceasefire in Gaza is the continued 'Israeli' evasion," Badran added.

"Any agreement must achieve a comprehensive ceasefire, a complete (Israeli) withdrawal from Gaza, (and) the return of the displaced, along with a prisoner exchange deal," he said.

The Hamas statement emphasized that any negotiation must be based on a clear plan to implement the existing agreement, which was agreed upon in early July. The agreement was also upheld by the UN Security Council.

The statement comes as a new round of truce talks is underway in Doha, in which Hamas has opted not to participate. Instead, the group has urged mediators to enforce the UN-backed truce agreement rather than holding more talks on a new one.

Hamas has, time and again, expressed readiness to implement a ceasefire deal, but says Israel's continued massacres in Gaza prove the regime is not serious about a permanent ceasefire.

Hamas official Ahmad Abdul Hadi said on Wednesday that it "would not take part in new talks" with the Israeli regime on a ceasefire in Gaza. In addition to Hadi, senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri also told Reuters on the same day, "Hamas is committed to the proposal presented to it on July 2," which is based on the UN Security Council resolution and the Biden speech and the movement is prepared to begin discussion over a mechanism to implement it immediately.

"Going to new negotiation allows the occupation to impose new conditions and employ the maze of negotiation to conduct more massacres," Zuhri said.

Israel reportedly presented new demands in the ceasefire talks after Hamas had agreed to the latest terms. Meanwhile, the Israeli regime is pushing ahead with its air and artillery attacks in the besieged Gaza Strip as the genocidal war enters its eleventh month.

The latest massacres have raised the number of Palestinians killed to over 40,000 leaving more than 92,400 others injured.

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