

Israel to allow displaced Palestinians return to north Gaza



A Palestinian man and a boy cry while a body is retrieved from the rubble of a building in a ruined neighborhood of Gaza's southern city of Rafah. (AFP photo)

Tel Aviv, January 27 (RHC)-- The Israeli regime has said Palestinians could begin returning to the north of the Gaza Strip on Monday after the Islamic Jihad resistance movement confirmed that Israeli captive

Arbel Yehud will be released before the next scheduled prisoner swap.

Israeli authorities have used her continued detention as an excuse to prevent hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians from returning to their homes in northern Gaza in violation of a ceasefire agreement.

In a statement released on Sunday, the Islamic Jihad spokesman Mohammed Al-Hajj Musa announced a deal had been reached regarding Yehud. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Sunday that a deal was reached with Hamas for the release of another six hostages.

"After firm negotiations, Israel will allow Gaza residents to cross into the northern part of the Strip starting tomorrow morning," Netanyahu's office said on Sunday.

"An additional phase of prisoner releases will be implemented next Thursday, during which Arbel Yehud, Agam Berger, and another prisoner will be released, and next Saturday three more prisoners will be released. Israel also received from Hamas a list of the status of all prisoners in the first phase."

The breakthrough preserves a fragile ceasefire in the Israeli war in Gaza, which has devastated the Gaza Strip and displaced nearly all its residents.

Israel had been preventing vast crowds of Palestinians from using a coastal road to return to northern Gaza.

Meanwhile, Palestinian resistance groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad have condemned a plan floated by US President Donald Trump to "clean out" the Gaza Strip.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One on Saturday, Trump suggested cleaning out the Palestinian land and relocating the war-stricken people there to neighboring Arab countries, namely Egypt and Jordan.

"You're talking about probably a million and half people ... I'd like Egypt to take people. And I'd like Jordan to take people," he said. "[W]e just clean out that whole thing," he said. Trump added that he expected to talk to Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi later.

In the meantime, the Palestinian leaders and people in Gaza condemned any attempt to relocate them, saying such a move is reminiscent of a dark page in Palestine's modern history known as the "Nakba" or catastrophe – when millions of Palestinians were forcibly displaced to create room for Israel's illegal creation.

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