

Hamas accuses Trump of aiding Israeli blockade of aid to Gaza



Palestinians try to continue their daily lives in rubble of buildings or makeshift tents at the Bureij Refugee Camp in Gaza City [File: Moiz Salhi/ Anadolu Agency]

Hamas says Trump's rhetoric helps Israel to tighten Gaza siege, risking starvation for 2.3 million residents.

Gaza City, March 7 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump's repeated threats against Hamas constitute support for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to evade the terms of the Gaza ceasefire and intensify the siege of the strip, the Palestinian armed group says.

"Trump's repeated threats against our people represent support to Netanyahu to evade the agreement and tightens the siege and starvation against our people," Hamas spokesperson Abdel-Latif al-Qanou said on Thursday, the Reuters news agency reported.

"The best track to release the remaining Israeli prisoners is by ... going into the second phase and compelling it [Israel] to adhere to the agreement signed under the sponsorship of mediators," he said.

Al-Qanou's comments came after Trump issued a flurry of social media posts on Wednesday, demanding Hamas "release all of the hostages now, not later," including the remains of dead captives, "or it is OVER for you."

"I am sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job, not a single Hamas member will be safe if you don't do as I say," he said. "Also, to the People of Gaza: A beautiful Future awaits, but not if you hold Hostages. If you do, you are DEAD! Make a SMART decision. RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW, OR THERE WILL BE HELL TO PAY LATER!"

The posts were sent after a White House spokesperson confirmed that a U.S. envoy held direct talks with Hamas, a move that signalled a departure from a decades-long U.S. policy of not negotiating with the group, which Washington considers a "terrorist" organization.

Egyptian security officials confirmed to Reuters on Thursday that talks between a Trump envoy and Hamas were also attended by Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

The Israel-Hamas ceasefire, which came into effect in January, calls for the remaining captives held in Gaza to be freed in a second phase of the truce, during which final plans would be negotiated for an end to the war.

The first phase of the ceasefire ended on Saturday (March 1st), and Israel has since imposed a blockade on all goods entering Gaza, demanding that Hamas release the remaining captives without beginning the negotiations to end the war.

Palestinians say the blockade could lead to starvation among the 2.3 million people living in Gaza's ruins.

Palestinians in Gaza criticized Trump's latest remarks, which followed his call for residents of the tiny coastal enclave to be resettled elsewhere and for the territory to be developed as a "Middle East Riviera".

"My house is gone, my work is gone, but I will not allow Trump to displace us," Mohamed Abou Azb, a resident of Khan Younis, told Al Jazeera. "We're rooted in this land, rooted in Khan Younis, rooted in Gaza. Our life and death are here. We will not bow to the trivialities being said, and we will not leave Gaza."

Abdallah Abu Rizk, also a resident of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, said Palestinians would never leave. "Over the years, we have remained steadfast in Gaza, the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. We will remain until we die in our land."

[SOURCE: PRESS TV]

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