

# *Israel Bars Swiss Diplomats from Visit to Gaza After Hamas Talks*

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Tel Aviv, November 30 (RHC)-- Israeli officials have prevented Swiss diplomats from visiting the besieged Gaza Strip, one day after Switzerland's envoy to the Palestinian Authority held meetings with senior members of the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas. An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the Israeli minister for military affairs, Avigdor Lieberman, had issued an order to bar the diplomats from travelling to the Palestinian enclave from occupied lands.

The official added that the order will remain in place "until clarifications occur," without providing any further details. Israel's army radio reported that the decision to bar the Swiss diplomats from the Gaza Strip was taken due to the public nature of the meetings, with Hamas posting photos on its website.

Earlier, Switzerland's envoy to the Palestinian Authority, Julien Thoni, met Hamas chief in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar. At least one other recent meeting was also held with Hamas leaders.

Hamas has controlled the Gaza Strip for a decade, and has fought three wars with Israel since 2008. Switzerland has contacts with Hamas in order to maintain dialogue with all parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as part of its peace and human rights efforts. The Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli siege since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standards of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty.

The Israeli regime denies about 1.8 million people in Gaza their basic rights, such as freedom of movement, jobs with proper wages as well as adequate healthcare and education.

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