

Israeli and Palestinian Talks Continue in Cairo



Cairo, August 18 (RHC)-- The latest round of talks between Israelis and Palestinians on a long-term ceasefire in the besieged Gaza Strip is underway in the Egyptian capital Cairo.

The Egypt-mediated indirect talks are being held during a halt in the Israeli onslaught on the blockaded enclave thanks to a five-day truce which is due to expire at midnight (21:00 GMT) on Monday. The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas and Israel agreed on the extension of an existing 72-hour truce for five more days late on Wednesday.

Palestinian negotiators have hinted that no long-term deal will be signed with Israel if Palestinians' demands are not met. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said that the group's "priority is to reach an agreement, but the occupiers must stop stalling."

"We are discussing an agreement from a position of strength, not weakness," he said, adding, "Either we have an agreement that meets our demands, or no agreement." He added: "Israelis will not enjoy safety until our people do and the siege is completely lifted. (Israelis in the south) will only return home when Hamas allows them to, not when [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu does."

Netanyahu has warned that no long-term deal to end the ongoing war on the besieged Gaza Strip is acceptable. Hamas wants the seven-year siege to be removed, but Tel Aviv claims it will only take the measure if Hamas disarms.

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