

First group of Palestinian prisoners released by Israeli regime

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This image from November 21 shows relatives and supporters of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons staging a sit-in outside the Red Cross in Ramallah in the West Bank [Jaafar Ashtiyeh/AFP]

Ramallah, November 24 (RHC)-- A total of 39 Palestinian female and child prisoners have been released by the Israeli occupation at Ofer prison in the occupied West Bank as a temporary ceasefire takes hold across Gaza following six weeks of Israeli attacks.

Buses carrying Palestinian prisoners who were imprisoned by Israel have arrived at the Beitunia checkpoint following their release from Ofer under a deal that followed weeks of ceasefire talks mediated by Qatar and Egypt.

The prisoners had been freed from three jails in Israel and the Israeli-occupied West Bank and then taken to the Ofer prison on buses.

Earlier, the Palestinian movement Hamas said a group of captives taken during its October 7 operation were also handed over to the Red Cross at the Rafah crossing and then transferred to the Israeli-occupied territories.

They included 13 women and child captives, some with dual citizenship. Hamas also released 10 Thai captives as well as one Filipino as the total number of Gaza captives released hit 24.

The Red Cross said that over several days it will transfer captives held in Gaza to Israeli authorities, and transfer Palestinian detainees to authorities in the West Bank.

The statement also said that the ICRC would bring in "additional medical supplies" to be delivered to hospitals in Gaza.

During a four-day truce, at least 50 captives are expected to be freed, leaving an estimated 190 other captives in Gaza. In exchange, 150 Palestinian prisoners were to be released, all women and teenage boys.

Hamas asked Palestinians in the city of Nablus to gather and welcome the women and children who are expected to be released from Israeli prisons. The group said it is inviting people for a "massive reception."

Media reports said Israeli forces fired volleys of tear gas at the people gathered outside the Ofer camp to welcome Palestinian prisoners.

Gazans have struggled to survive with shortages of water and other essentials. 150 Trucks carrying more aid, including fuel, gas, and food, began moving into Gaza from the Rafah crossing with Egypt shortly after the truce began at 7:00 am on Friday.

Jens Laerke, spokesman for the United Nations humanitarian agency, OCHA, expressed hope in Geneva that the pause "leads to a longer-term humanitarian ceasefire." He repeated the need for access across Gaza, especially in the north "where the damage and the humanitarian needs are the greatest."

According to the UN, 1.7 million of Gaza's 2.4 million people are estimated to have been displaced by the fighting. The truce was also a chance for some Palestinians to return to Gaza through the Rafah crossing.

Israeli war cabinet minister Benny Gantz reiterated at a solidarity rally for the families of captives in Tel Aviv that the regime will resume fighting after the pause.

Calm also returned to Lebanon's southern border on Friday as the temporary truce took effect, according to Lebanese media.

Since the Gaza war erupted, Lebanon's southern border with Israel has witnessed deadly exchanges of fire, primarily involving the Israeli military and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, as well as Palestinian militant groups.

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