

Top Hamas official says Netanyahu stonewalling truce deal

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Hossam Badran, member of Hamas' Political Bureau

Beirut, May 4 (RHC)-- A senior Hamas official says Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is stonewalling a truce deal between the Gaza Strip-based resistance movement and the Tel Aviv regime, which has brought the Palestinian territory under a genocidal war.

"Netanyahu was the obstructionist of all previous rounds of dialog... and it is clear that he still is," Hossam Badran, member of Hamas' Political Bureau, told AFP by telephone on Friday.

Badran cited the Israeli premier's insistence on carrying out a ground invasion against the southern Gaza city of Rafah as a key stumbling block in negotiations aimed at potential arrival at a deal.

Around 1.5 million Palestinians have sought refuge in the city from the ravages of the war that has so far killed at least 34,622 Palestinians.

Badran said Netanyahu's resolve to attack Rafah was calculated to "thwart any possibility of concluding an agreement."

An Israeli official has said the regime would go ahead with invading the city "with or without" a truce deal. "We will enter Rafah and we will eliminate the Hamas battalions there – with or without a deal, in order to achieve the total victory," Netanyahu said late last month.

Hamas, however, says the regime will stop short of defeating the resistance as it has so far during the war. The regime has also failed to achieve its other objectives, including displacing Gaza's entire population to neighboring Egypt, and enabling the release of those who were taken captive in Gazan resistance groups' Operation al-Aqsa Storm, following which Tel Aviv launched the war.

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