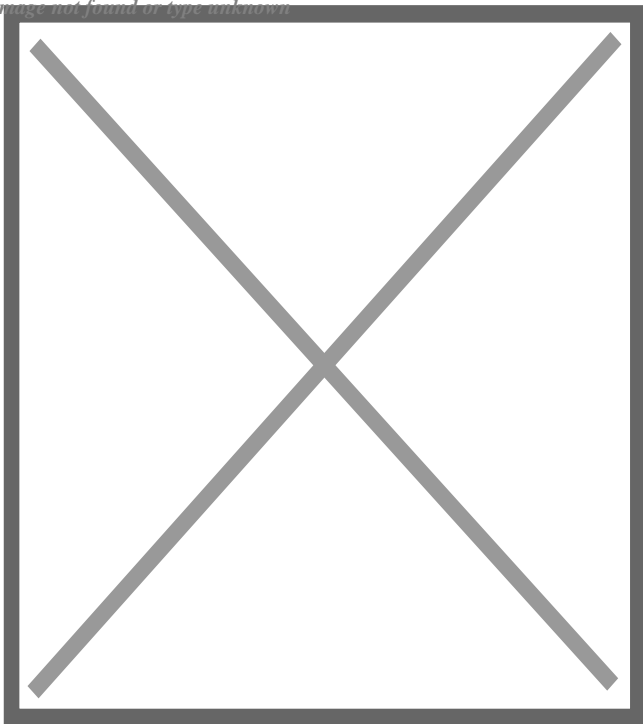


Israel continues Gaza attacks, says gaps remain in renewed truce talks

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Doha, July 6 (RHC)-- An Israeli delegation has travelled to Qatar after a new Hamas proposal earlier this week generated renewed hope for a truce agreement, as fighting continues to rage across Gaza.

The Israeli negotiators, led by spy chief David Barnea, met mediators in Doha on Friday, according to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office. The talks were set to resume next week, the office said, when another negotiating team would be deployed to Qatar. The office added there were still "gaps between the parties" in their positions.

The latest development came after Hamas on Wednesday said it had presented new "ideas" to Qatari, Egyptian and Turkish mediators on how to reach a ceasefire and captive-exchange deal to halt the nine-month-long conflict.

At least 38,011 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's war on Gaza, which began following a Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on October 7th that killed at least 1,139 people, according to an Al Jazeera tally based on Israeli statistics.

While details of Hamas's latest proposal were not immediately clear, a US official said Thursday they contained a substantial shift in the group's previous position. The official, in a call with reporters, described the update as a "breakthrough," while cautioning that obstacles remained.

On Friday, Hamas spokesperson Jihad Taha said the group's latest proposals "have been met with a positive response by the mediators", while adding "the official Israeli position has not yet become clear", according to The Associated Press news agency.

Both Israel and Hamas have come under increased pressure to reach a deal, but talks surrounding a United Nations-backed plan outlined by US President Joe Biden in May have stalled in recent weeks. A major sticking point for Hamas has been whether Israel would resume fighting after the dozens of Israeli captives still held by the group were released.

Meanwhile, despite repeated U.S. claims that Israel supported the plan, Netanyahu has repeatedly said the war would not end until Hamas is "eradicated". In a call with Biden on Thursday, Netanyahu again said the war would only end with Israel "achieving all its objectives."

Despite the latest diplomatic flurry, fighting continued to rage in Gaza on Friday, with Israeli forces focusing their attacks on the southern cities of Khan Younis and Rafah and northern Gaza City.

At least 10 bodies were taken to Nasser Hospital following attacks on the two southern cities, hospital officials told Al Jazeera correspondent Tareq Abu Azzoum. He also reported "unrelenting" attacks in Gaza City's Shujayea neighbourhood where he said the Israeli military has been "demolishing entire blocks".

Meanwhile, the Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, claimed its fighters had killed 10 Israeli soldiers in an ambush in Shujayea. Israel's military did not immediately comment on the claim.

Tensions remained high around the Lebanon-Israel border, where increased fighting between Hezbollah and the Israeli military has continued to stoke concerns over a wider escalation. The Lebanese group said it targeted several Israeli military positions near the border on Friday.

Hezbollah later said in a statement that leader Hassan Nasrallah had met a Hamas delegation to discuss "the latest developments in the negotiations" and "security and political developments" in Gaza and the region.

The fighting in Gaza has uprooted about 90 percent of Gaza's population, forcing many to live in unsanitary conditions with little access to healthcare or other aid. Nearly 500,000 people face "catastrophic" hunger in the enclave, according to the United Nations.

On Friday, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic warned that Israeli army orders this week for more than 250,000 Palestinians to evacuate from eastern Khan Younis would only further inflame the humanitarian catastrophe.

"This evacuation decision is certain to worsen overcrowding, and cause severe shortages in the already overwhelmed remaining hospitals, at a time when access to emergency medical care is critical," the two wrote in a joint statement, adding that forced evacuations are creating "a humanitarian crisis within the crisis".

"A ceasefire is all the more important now, and would make possible a surge of humanitarian assistance to Gaza as well as the release of all hostages," they said.

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