

Israel to release over 1,890 Palestinians in first phase of Gaza truce

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People hold placards bearing portraits of Palestinians, currently detained by Israel, during a protest in solidarity with them in the occupied West Bank on January 14, 2025. (Photo: AFP)

Cairo, January 19 (RHC)-- Egypt says Israel will release more than 1,890 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for 33 Israeli captives during the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal.

On Wednesday, a three-phase ceasefire deal was agreed to by Hamas and Israel to pause the regime's devastating war on Gaza.

Egypt's foreign ministry said Saturday that the prisoners would be freed during the first 42-day phase of the ceasefire, which will go into effect at 8:30 am local time (0630 GMT) Sunday. Israel had said earlier that 737 Palestinian prisoners would be freed --- none before 1400 GMT, Sunday.

Foreign captives, including Americans, are also expected to be released in addition to the 33 Israeli captives, CNN reported, citing sources familiar with the matter.

Of the 251 Israelis held captive by Hamas during Operation al-Aqsa Storm against the occupied territories on Oct.7, 2023, 94 are still in Gaza, including 34 the Israeli military says are dead.

At the end of the first phase, 65 captives will remain in Gaza. Their release — some of whom are likely dead— will be negotiated, starting by day 16 of the truce.

Egypt and Qatar were the key mediators that facilitated the long-running efforts to put an end to months of Israel's brutal campaign of genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Gaza Strip, which has also been under the regime's inhumane blockade for more than 15 months.

Now Egypt says it will also provide "the entry of 600 trucks per day to the Strip, including 50 trucks of fuel," according to Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty.

He said 50 fuel trucks will enter the besieged territory once the ceasefire starts Sunday. "We hope that 300 trucks will go to the north of the Gaza Strip."

The ceasefire marks a critical moment for aid delivery into the territory. Hundreds of trucks have already lined up at the Rafah border crossing, which had been closed since May.

Rights groups say the ceasefire agreement is a relief, but it is only the beginning of addressing the immense humanitarian, psychological, and medical needs in Gaza.

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