

*Displaced Palestinians begin
returning home after Gaza
ceasefire*

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Forcibly displaced Palestinians return to what's left of their homes after Israel-Hamas ceasefire comes into effect.

Displaced Palestinians walk past the rubble as they attempt to return to their homes in northern Gaza [Dawoud Abu Alkas/Reuters]

Gaza City, January 19 (RHC)--Tens of thousands of forcibly displaced Palestinians are heading to their homes, walking through devastated swaths of Gaza, after the long-awaited ceasefire between Israel and

Hamas took effect following more than 15 months of war.

Israel on Sunday said a truce with Hamas began in Gaza at 11:15am (09:15 GMT), nearly three hours after initially scheduled, following a last-minute delay on the orders of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Almost the entire 2.3-million population of Gaza was forcibly displaced during the 15 months of genocide, in many cases more than once.

In the northern area of Jabalia, hundreds of Palestinians streamed down a sandy path, returning to an apocalyptic landscape dotted with piles of rubble and destroyed buildings.

In the main southern city of Khan Younis, people celebrated their pending homecoming.

"I am very, very happy," said Wafa al-Habeel. "I want to go back and kiss the ground and the soil of Gaza. I am longing for Gaza [City] and longing for our loved ones."

During the delay in the ceasefire coming into effect, Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli attacks killed at least 19 Palestinians.

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