

Hamas says Netanyahu is procrastinating over next phase of Gaza ceasefire

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Palestinians walk on a street among the rubble of buildings destroyed during the Israeli war,

amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, at Jabalia refugee camp, northern Gaza Strip, February 17, 2025. (Photo by Reuters)

Gaza City, February 21 (RHC)-- The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas says Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu is "procrastinating" on negotiations for the second phase of the ceasefire deal in Gaza.

"The second phase negotiations have not practically begun, and we are ready to engage in them as stipulated in the agreement," Hamas spokesman Abdul Latif Al-Qanou said in a statement on Thursday. "Netanyahu is procrastinating regarding the second phase," he added.

The spokesman stressed that Hamas is "committed to the ceasefire agreement as long as the Israeli occupation is committed to it." The ceasefire consists of three phases, each lasting 42 days. In phase one - the current phase - a total of 33 Israeli captives will be released in exchange for around 2,000 Palestinian abductees held in the regime's jails.

The talks on the second phase of the ceasefire were supposed to begin on February 3rd.

On Thursday, Netanyahu vowed revenge against Gaza after Hamas handed over the bodies of four Israeli captives, a mother and her two children and an elderly journalist, killed in the regime's strikes on the besieged strip during the 15-month war.

Following the handover, Netanyahu said in a statement published by his office that "Returning these four bodies compels us to ensure that what happened on October 7 never happens again," suggesting his intent to resume the genocidal war on Gaza.

That's while the same Israeli attacks that killed the four captives also killed 17,881 Palestinian children.

"To the families of Bibas and Lifshitz: We would have preferred your sons to return to you alive, but your army and government leaders chose to kill them instead of bringing them back," Hamas said in a statement earlier in the day, as the premier's prolonged refusal to negotiate their release led to their deaths.

"The criminal Netanyahu is crying today over the bodies of his prisoners who returned to him in coffins, in a blatant attempt to evade responsibility for their killing in front of his audience," the movement said.

Netanyahu's threats come amid mounting public anger over the return of Israeli captives in coffins for the first time in the exchange deal. The backlash forced him to annul plans to attend the reception of the remains.

The Israeli opposition has blamed Netanyahu for the deaths, arguing he stalled a prisoner swap for months to avoid jeopardizing his fragile coalition, which includes far-right ministers pushing for the war in Gaza to continue.

A ceasefire deal was reached between Israel and Hamas last month after 15 months of the regime's genocidal war on the strip, which claimed the lives of at least 48,319 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 111,749 others.

The regime approved the ceasefire after falling short of realizing any of its wartime objectives, including freeing the captives, "eliminating" the Gazan resistance, and causing forced displacement of Gaza's entire population to neighboring Egypt.

The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu and his former minister of military affairs Yoav Gallant in November for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

In a separate case brought by South Africa, the International Court of Justice (aka the World Court) is considering accusations that Israel committed genocide in its war on Gaza.

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