



## War in Israel: Update on Current Situation

January 16, 2025 - October 7 War, Day 468

**Last night, the government in Qatar announced that after 15 months of fighting, a deal has been reached between Israel and Hamas, mediated by the United States, Qatar, and Egypt. The deal will involve a ceasefire in fighting in Gaza, a staggered release of some of the hostages (and other releases in a later stage), alongside an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the release of many Palestinian terrorists from Israeli jails.**

**Jewish Federations of North America issued [this](#) statement on the deal.**

Jewish Federations will host an exclusive briefing on the deal to hear from Israeli journalist Haviv Rettig Gur and founder and CEO of the Israel Trauma Coalition Talia

Levanon. Tune in today, Thursday, January 16 at 3:30 PM ET. Register [here](#).

## Ceasefire Deal

- Following months of negotiations and failed attempts, all sides **reached agreement for a ceasefire** deal yesterday.
- Momentum toward an agreement had been building for weeks, with parties seeming determined to sign a deal **before the inauguration** of US President Donald Trump on January 20.
- In recent days, a **high-level Israeli team**, led by the chiefs of the Mossad and the Shin Bet, were in Qatar for final negotiations. President Joe Biden's and President-Elect Trump's top Middle East advisors were in attendance.
- Israel's cabinet was scheduled to meet at 11am today to **approve the deal**. However, earlier in the morning, the government announced that Hamas was trying to make last-minute changes to the agreement, and the Cabinet would therefore delay its vote until Hamas backed down from its new demands.
- A Cabinet vote was to have been followed by a vote of the full government, comprising all Israeli ministers, **where it is still expected to pass**. The agreement does not require Knesset approval. Once the government votes, lists of Palestinian security prisoners set to be freed will be published in Israel, to enable petitions to the country's Supreme Court against their release by families of victims, or other interested parties. The court has rejected such pleas in the past.

- If all goes to plan, the deal will **come into force this coming Sunday**, January 19.
- Despite the optimism over the imminent return of some of the hostages, **many Israelis remain skeptical** over numerous aspects of the deal.
  - Today, [hundreds](#) **protested against the deal** outside the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem.
  - The Religious Zionism Party, as well as the Jewish Strength Party have both **expressed strong opposition** to the deal's terms.
  - While these two parties will vote against the deal, most agree that they will not **bring down the government** over the agreement, at least in the first stage.
- While the full text of the deal has not been released, [a leaked document](#) is believed to be real. It is also widely understood that the agreement will include the following aspects:

## The Terms

### Stage One

- The first stage will begin on Sunday and is **set to last for 42 days**.
- Thirty-three hostages will be released in this stage in a staggered manner, throughout the six-week period.
  - The **first hostages will likely be let out on Sunday**, with women and children first, followed by the female soldiers, then men over the age of 50 and young men who are defined as "humanitarian cases."
  - The **humanitarian cases** include Avera Mengistu, held since 2014, and Hisham al-Sayed, held by Hamas since 2015. Both Israeli citizens entered

the Gaza Strip while already suffering from longstanding mental health issues.

- The **33 include** four female civilians; five female soldiers; Shiri Bibas and her two small sons, Ariel and baby Kfir; 10 men aged 50 and over, and 11 sick or wounded men.
- It is understood that the **majority of the 33 are still alive**, and Hamas is obligated under the agreement to inform Israel as to the status of all 33 within the first week of the deal's implementation.
- The first three hostages are set to be released on the first day, with four more to go free on the seventh day. After that, three hostages are to be released every seven days, with the final 14 to be released in the last week of Stage One.
- The **IDF will withdraw** from much of Gaza, but will remain in an area 2,300 feet wide along the border, and will also keep some troops in the Philadelphi Corridor (a small strip of land between Gaza and Egypt, considered critical to stopping Hamas from bringing in new weapons over the border).
- Israel **will release at least 1,000 convicted terrorists** from its jails, including about 250 who were sentenced to life imprisonment. These will include terrorists captured after October 7 who were not directly involved in the attacks of that day. Some reports indicate that high-level terrorists serving life sentences will not be allowed to remain in Gaza or the West Bank, but will be deported to other countries, such as Turkey or Qatar. The exact number of terrorists to be released depends on how many of the hostages from the list of 33 are alive.

- The final numbers of terrorists to be released will be based on **agreed-upon ratios** including:
  - Nine sick or injured soldiers in exchange for 110 terrorists
  - 58 terrorists (including 27 serving life-sentences) in exchange for each hostage over the age of 50
  - At least 50 terrorists for each female soldier
  - 77 terrorists in exchange for the two Israelis who have been held long-term by Hamas (47 of whom were released in the Gilad Schalit prisoner exchange, but then later rearrested for terror offences).
- Israel will begin allowing **unarmed refugees** to return to the north of the Gaza Strip on foot, without being inspected. At a later stage, return by vehicles will be allowed, once inspected.
- The **Rafah Border Crossing with Egypt will be reopened**, allowing all sick and wounded civilians to leave Gaza for treatment, as well as large amounts of humanitarian aid to enter.

## Stage Two

- On Day 16, negotiations will begin on the release of the remaining 65 hostages, many of whom are thought to be deceased. All living hostages will be freed before the bodies of those who are dead.
- Also in this stage, ongoing security arrangements will be discussed for the areas that Israel evacuates.
- Israel would withdraw more fully from all areas Gaza only once all hostages have been released and all bodies returned.
- Negotiators on Stage Two will also discuss how Gaza will be governed.

- Israel's Health Ministry [has published](#) the **medical protocol for the reception of the hostages**, outlining the stages of care, treatment, and long-term support. Hostages will be taken to one of six designated hospitals that are positioned close to Gaza. The Health Ministry has recommended a minimum hospitalization period of four days for each returnee; each returned hostage will be treated in separate facilities designed specifically for hostages

## Reactions to the Deal

- **Israel's President Isaac Herzog:** "As the President of the State of Israel, I say in the clearest terms: This is the right move. This is an important move. This is a necessary move. There is no greater moral, human, Jewish, or Israeli obligation than to bring our sons and daughters back to us—whether to recover at home, or to be laid to rest."
- **US President Biden** said, "This plan was developed and negotiated by my team and will largely be implemented by the incoming administration. That's why I told my team to keep the incoming administration fully informed, as that's how it should be. Working together as Americans."
- **Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** said he will release a statement only once the agreement is final and signed. Nonetheless, last night he phoned President-Elect Trump, and then President Biden, to thank them for their support in reaching a deal.
- **Incoming US President Trump** wrote, "This EPIC ceasefire agreement could have only happened as a result of our Historic Victory in November, as it

signaled to the entire World that my Administration would seek Peace and negotiate deals to ensure the safety of all Americans, and our Allies.”

- **Senior Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayy** said, “Our people have thwarted the declared and hidden goals of the occupation. Today we prove that the occupation will never defeat our people and their resistance.” He went on to praise those who had carried out the October 7 massacres.
- **The Hostage and Missing Families Forum** welcomed the hostage release-ceasefire deal but said that its “fight won’t end until all 98 of the hostages are returned to Israel from captivity in Gaza.”
- At the same time, the more hawkish **Tikva Forum** (of hostage families) said “We are excited, like the entire Israeli people, when we see the hostages returning home after a long and cruel captivity, (but are concerned that) “this deal is dangerous, both for the hostages who will remain in captivity and for the entire Israeli people.”
- Religious Zionism Party head, **Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich** expressed his party’s strong opposition to the deal, saying, “The deal that will be presented to the government is both bad and dangerous for Israel’s national security. Alongside the immense joy and excitement over the return of each kidnapped individual, this agreement undermines many of the achievements of the war, during which the heroes of this nation risked their lives. It may, God forbid, cost us dearly in blood. We strongly oppose it.”
- **Rachel Goldberg-Polin and Jon Polin**, the bereaved parents of murdered American-Israeli captive Hersh Goldberg-Polin, [voiced their support](#) for the

ceasefire-hostage deal agreement on Wednesday - claiming that such a deal would be the start of Israel's healing.

- Read more [here](#) on international reactions to the deal.

## Fallen Soldiers

- The last week has been a very difficult one for the IDF, with a large number of soldiers being killed in Gaza.
- On Saturday, four soldiers fell and a further five were killed on Monday, with a large number injured.
- See [here](#) for a full list of casualties.

## For Further Reading

- [Has Israel ended the multifront threat?](#)
- [MEF Dispatch: Ceasefire in Gaza](#)
- [What the Palestinian victory celebrations mean](#)
- [Israel Is Breaking Free of Dependence on American Munitions](#)

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