

## Gaza Ceasefire Talks Begin: Genuine Opportunity or Israeli Maneuver?



Regional and international mediators, backed by U.S. pressure, have successfully advanced the negotiations to the completion of the first stage—agreeing on the “general framework” for an agreement. This framework represents a revised version of the latest proposal by U.S. Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff.

Although Hamas has raised various reservations and interpretations—demanding that they be incorporated into the framework, which Israel has clearly rejected—the key outcome is that this framework has now been established as the reference point for starting detailed negotiations.

Campaigns are already underway, with negotiating delegations arriving in Doha, Qatar, to begin detailed discussions on the technical and substantive aspects of a ceasefire agreement. Israel aims to confine the agreement to a prisoner exchange arrangement, offering no substantial political or humanitarian gains.

In contrast, the Palestinian resistance seeks a more transformative deal, one that shifts the balance of power, secures significant gains, and paves the way for a comprehensive end to the war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remains the pivotal figure in determining

how seriously this current negotiation process will be pursued. He is balancing a range of political and security considerations, some of which may push him to succeed in this round—especially under intense American pressure and complemented by strategic incentives tied to both the regional scene and his domestic political crisis.

### Negotiation Leverage

From the outset, the negotiation process has been marred by distortion, largely due to U.S. intervention framing the situation as an “inverted pyramid.” Initially, former President Donald Trump claimed an imminent ceasefire and prisoner exchange agreement in “days,” followed by a Truth Social statement that his representatives had a “long and constructive meeting with the Israelis.”

Although unnamed, those said to be present included Steve Witkoff, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Vice President J.D. Vance, alongside Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer.

Trump stated that Israel had agreed to the conditions for a 60-day ceasefire, during which “we will work with all parties to end the war.” He also noted that Qatar and Egypt, “who have worked hard to establish peace,” would be presenting the final proposal.



What was actually approved, however, was Witkoff’s deal on a ceasefire and prisoner exchange, incorporating Qatari amendments to salvage the talks following Hamas’s rejection of the revision Dermer carried. Notably, Hamas was largely excluded from the details—a clear attempt to pressure the movement into

acquiescence by appealing to public opinion and implicitly threatening increased escalation if they refused.

Trump himself stated: “I hope, for the Middle East’s sake, Hamas accepts this agreement, because the situation will worsen” otherwise.

### Negotiation Reality

Hamas faces substantial political and media pressure to accept this proposal as the “reference framework” for talks. A well-orchestrated media campaign has followed, beginning with Trump’s statements and amplified by numerous leaks in regional and global media—some claiming Hamas was already in agreement.

These leaks were no coincidence; rather, they formed part of a broader strategy to influence Hamas’s internal decision-making and manipulate Palestinian public opinion—especially within a besieged Gaza—by creating inflated expectations of an imminent ceasefire.

Hamas, however, subjected the proposal to careful scrutiny, conducting meticulous political analyses of both the regional and global landscape, as well as the internal Israeli political context.



The proposal underwent extensive consultations within Hamas’s military, security, and political wings—both inside and outside Gaza—and discussions with national and Islamist factions involved in the armed resistance.

On the evening of July 4, Hamas announced it had completed its internal consultations and sent its response to mediators. The response, described as

“positive,” confirmed their readiness to immediately enter detailed negotiations on the framework’s implementation.

According to Arab media reports, Hamas’s response comprised provisional acceptance, with clarifications—not rejections—focusing on three core amendments:

**International Guarantees:** Hamas asked for explicit guarantees ensuring a swift transition from a 60-day ceasefire to full peace negotiations, and insisted that additional international guarantors be included.

**Aid and Relief Protocols:** They demanded renewed adherence to the humanitarian protocols from the January 19 agreement guarantee the entry of heavy machinery to recover bodies, remove rubble, repair hospitals, and reopen bakeries.

**Withdrawal Maps and References:** Hamas insisted on treating the new framework as an extension of the January agreement—requiring a return to pre-March 2 boundaries as a first step toward a full Israeli withdrawal.

Hamas leadership emphasized the new framework should be viewed as a continuation of the January 19 agreement—not a standalone deal—to avoid repetitive negotiations that delay withdrawal and prolong the war.

This position received broad national support. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine held consultations with Hamas and suggested wording changes to prevent Israel from using loopholes to dodge obligations. They stressed the priority is ending the aggression with a binding deal.

Islamic Jihad backed Hamas, submitting detailed implementation notes and seeking international guarantees to prevent Israel from resuming aggression after the prisoner exchange.

Other Palestinian factions also issued supportive statements, praising Hamas’s responsible response and bolstering Palestinian political legitimacy.

### Hostages and Regional Triumph

These negotiations occur at a politically sensitive juncture, in which U.S. and Israeli interests align to capitalize on results in Gaza as part of a wider strategy to reshape the Middle East. Washington’s vision includes completing the architecture of a so-called “new Middle East” and fortifying what Israel’s government defines as strategic gains.

Netanyahu aims to frame the outcome of this war as a triumph that caps a series of regional campaigns beginning—and ending—with Gaza. He counts on internal right-wing unity, electoral gains, and the vital political payoff of recovering Israeli

hostages held in Gaza.

The Israeli military asserts Operation “Gideon’s Tanks” has concluded, but then-Chief of Staff has warned that a critical decision lies ahead: either continue military control of Gaza, risking hostage lives, or pursue a prisoner swap—now favored as less costly and more viable by the military.

Despite pressure from hardliners like Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir—who advocate for a full-scale invasion and military rule—Netanyahu recognizes that escalation could backfire catastrophically if hostages die. Thus, he is under compelling pressure to deliver a swap deal framed as a victory.

Meanwhile, U.S. pressure via a Trump-led team seeks to fix a 60-day ceasefire as a stepping-stone in a wider regional package that includes arrangements important to Israel. Washington is reportedly offering significant political and personal incentives to Netanyahu—including discussions of pardons in “uncoordinated” talks.

The broader American–Israeli strategy extends well beyond Gaza. It seeks to restore momentum in normalization—especially with Saudi Arabia—stabilize the northern front via arrangements with Syria, and take decisive steps to neutralize Hezbollah.

It also envisions the “day after” Gaza: dismantling resistance infrastructure, depoliticizing the enclave, keeping the door open for population displacement, and cementing the war’s strategic gains, including curbing Iran’s military threats.

### Resistance: Seizing an Opening

The Palestinian resistance views the current political landscape—and its inherent risks—as a rare window to end the devastating war on Gaza. They are treating these developments as a golden opportunity, provided the deal’s details are tightly controlled and robust regional pressure compels the U.S. to back enforcement on Netanyahu.

Resistance leaders understand the challenge: Netanyahu seeks political and strategic gains without paying a genuine price, trying to dilute any agreement into a bare prisoner exchange devoid of war-ending substance or humanitarian impact.

Thus, the resistance focuses on two parallel tracks: securing a comprehensive, sustainable ceasefire and counteracting the war’s structural impact—starting with wresting humanitarian aid from a security-centered “Gaza Humanitarian Corps” back under UN and Red Crescent control.

They insist on a full Israeli withdrawal from the entire Gaza territory, rejecting

any future Israeli presence—particularly near the Philadelphi axis and Rafah crossing, including all Israeli security mechanisms.

While maintaining these strategic demands, they show flexibility on implementation details, prioritizing ceasefire enforcement above any individual issue.

On the ground, the resistance has responded clearly to escalatory Israeli leaks about plans for a full-scale invasion and mass displacement in northern Gaza.

Their increased ambushes and operations across multiple fronts signal that any prolonged Israeli presence will carry a serious cost—reshaping the dynamic into “negotiations under fire” and redefining reality from Israel’s conditional expectations.

For the first time in months, a real opportunity has emerged to restore calm to Gaza. But this optimism remains cautious, since no signs yet show that the Israeli government is ready to offer meaningful concessions or empower its delegation to negotiate in earnest.

Thus, the success of these talks depends heavily on the degree of U.S. pressure applied to Israel to enforce a ceasefire that can gradually evolve into a lasting peace.