

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Trump Announces Breakthrough in Gaza Ceasefire Talks as Israel and Hamas Agree on Initial Phase

President Trump says Israel and Hamas have agreed to a U.S.-mediated plan that includes the release of all hostages and partial Israeli withdrawal. The deal, reached after 2 yrs of war, could mark the most significant truce since the conflict began

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Ernice Gilbert **October 09, 2025**



President Donald J. Trump.

President Donald Trump declared on October 8 that Israel and Hamas have reached an agreement on the first phase of a U.S.-brokered ceasefire plan for Gaza, marking a potential turning point after two years of devastating conflict. The announcement, posted

on Truth Social, came amid indirect negotiations in Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh resort, facilitated by U.S. envoys including Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, alongside mediators from Qatar, Egypt, and Turkey.

"Israel and Hamas have both signed off on the first Phase of our Peace Plan," Trump wrote, adding, "This means that ALL of the Hostages will be released very soon, and Israel will withdraw their Troops to an agreed upon line as the first steps toward a Strong, Durable, and Everlasting Peace." The deal builds on a 20-point framework Trump unveiled last week during a White House meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who voiced full support for the proposal.

The agreement's core elements center on a phased hostage and prisoner exchange, with Hamas committing to release all remaining Israeli hostages—estimated at 48, including both living individuals and the bodies of the deceased—within 72 hours of Israeli Cabinet approval. In return, Israel would free nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, followed by a partial withdrawal of Israeli forces to a predefined line in Gaza. Hamas confirmed the accord in a statement, praising the mediating nations and urging "President Trump, the guarantor countries of the agreement, and all Arab, Islamic, and international parties to compel the occupation government to fully implement the terms of the agreement and not allow it to evade or delay the implementation of what has been agreed upon." Netanyahu, in a written statement, described the development as a step toward bringing all hostages home "with God's help," and scheduled a Cabinet meeting for Thursday to ratify the terms.

Talks leading to this breakthrough intensified on October 6, following Hamas's earlier expression of willingness to release hostages "as long as the field conditions for the exchange are met." U.S. officials, leveraging alliances with Qatar and other Arab states, worked to align regional stakeholders behind Trump's plan, which envisions not only an immediate halt to hostilities but also a broader reconstruction and security framework for Gaza. The negotiations represent the third pause in fighting since Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on southern Israel, which killed about 1,200 people and led to the abduction of 251 hostages. Israel's subsequent military campaign has resulted in over 67,000 Palestinian deaths, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health, exacerbating a humanitarian crisis that has displaced much of the enclave's population.

While the initial phase addresses urgent humanitarian concerns, unresolved issues loom large for subsequent stages, including the complete demilitarization of Gaza, the removal of Hamas leadership, and the establishment of a new governance structure. Trump's framework calls for laying down arms after the exchange, but experts caution that sticking points—such as the extent of Israeli withdrawal and guarantees against future attacks—could jeopardize progress, as seen in prior failed truces. The Biden administration's earlier efforts yielded brief ceasefires and partial hostage releases, but Trump's approach emphasizes a comprehensive "everlasting peace" tied to regional normalization with Arab nations. U.S. officials expressed guarded optimism, noting the deal's potential to end what has become the deadliest chapter in Israeli-Palestinian history.

International reactions have been cautiously supportive, with Qatar, Egypt, and Turkey welcoming the mediators' role in bridging gaps between the non-communicating parties. Palestinian officials in the West Bank, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, issued a

statement endorsing the hostage release but stressing the need for a permanent end to the blockade and occupation. On the Israeli side, hostage families and opposition leaders hailed the news as a "great day," though some right-wing factions expressed reservations about prisoner swaps. The United Nations, through Secretary-General António Guterres, called the agreement a "vital step toward de-escalation," while urging swift aid delivery to Gaza's beleaguered civilians. No immediate response came from Iran, a key Hamas backer, amid ongoing U.S. sanctions.

If successful, it could usher in Trump's clearest foreign policy achievement of his second term, fulfilling campaign promises to swiftly resolve the conflict. Yet, the path to a full peace remains fraught, with both sides vowing to pursue broader objectives—Israel's security guarantees and Hamas's demands for sovereignty. Official updates from the White House, Israeli government, and Qatari mediators will guide the next steps, as the world watches whether this "first phase" evolves into lasting stability.