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## Will there be a ceasefire in Gaza?

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## Will there be a ceasefire in Gaza?

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In recent weeks, Israel has received Hamas's response to a proposal announced by US President Joe Biden at the end of May that includes the release of some 120 hostages held in Gaza and a ceasefire in the Palestinian enclave<sup>1</sup>.

Hamas is believed to have shown flexibility on some terms that would allow an agreement to be reached for the current status. Hamas has said any deal must end the nearly nine-month-old war and achieve a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza<sup>2</sup>.

For its part, Israel maintains that it will only accept temporary pauses in the fighting until Hamas is eliminated<sup>3</sup>.

While Netanyahu's office issued a statement stressing that the war will not end unless all its goals are achieved<sup>4</sup>, Hamas welcomed Biden's statements, saying that it considers his words on stopping the war, withdrawing from the Gaza Strip, rebuilding it, and exchanging prisoners positive<sup>5</sup>.

What Biden referred to as the Israel plan to reach an agreement, and the reaction of the Israeli government to Netanyahu reflects a paradox, as the Netanyahu government should have taken a position in support of Biden's proposals, but the issue was reversed.

This contradiction and ambiguity in Netanyahu's position has at times plunged the media and social network into an Israeli situation that is confusing and shocking for Israeli society, as well as raising various questions to the point that some Israelis. Especially among the extreme right, who have accused Netanyahu several times of colluding and transgressing his partners, stating that he was planning to end the war without their knowledge or that of Israeli society.

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<sup>1</sup> Israel weighs Hamas response to Gaza ceasefire proposal. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-weighs-hamas-response-gaza-ceasefire-proposal-2024-07-04/#:~:text=Israel%20received%20Hamas'%20response%20on,ceasefire%20in%20the%20Palestinian%20enclave>.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas says it showed flexibility to reach cease-fire deal in Gaza. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/hamas-says-it-showed-flexibility-to-reach-cease-fire-deal-in-gaza/3169967>

<sup>3</sup> Israel war on Gaza updates: Israeli forces intensify attacks, kill dozens. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2024/6/29/israel-war-on-gaza-live-60000-flee-street-battles-in-shujayea-area>

<sup>4</sup> Netanyahu obstructing Gaza cease-fire negotiations: Hamas. <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/mid-east/netanyahu-obstructing-gaza-cease-fire-negotiations-hamas>

<sup>5</sup> What is the Israel-Hamas Gaza ceasefire deal presented by Joe Biden? <https://www.newarab.com/news/what-gaza-ceasefire-deal-presented-joe-biden>

In this regard, some considered the statement from Netanyahu's office as a political game that does not reflect reality, while others considered Biden's statements and his repeated emphasis on the end of the war without any reference to the political future of the Gaza Strip as dramatic statements that signify acceptance of Hamas remaining in power after the war.

How can this issue then be resolved? For weeks, Israeli media, citing government sources, have been circulating new Israeli ideas for reaching an agreement and in some cases taking shortcuts. Israel reportedly wanted to send these ideas to Hamas through intermediaries.

During this period, the Palestinian side did not take Israeli ideas seriously, believing that they were only a negotiating tactic to get rid of international pressure.

Earlier, Biden announced the existence of an Israeli initiative, such as the Egyptian-Qatari plan that was previously presented in coordination with the United States and approved by Hamas, consisting of three stages, with each stage lasting 42 days. Biden confirmed at the time that it will lead to a complete cessation of the war and withdrawal from the Gaza Strip<sup>6</sup>. Now, no matter how different this plan is from the Egyptian-Qatari plan, it seems that what Biden talked about earlier are Israeli ideas with an American addition and framework, hence the discontent of the Israelis.

The Biden administration has concluded that this war must end, knowing at the same time that Netanyahu is looking to buy time to prolong the war, and that Israel's proposals are tactics in that direction. Therefore, Biden and his government seem to want to end Netanyahu's game. They believe that the solution is in the official announcement of Israeli ideas through amendments to the proposal of Egypt and Qatar within the framework of the United States, while observers believe that US President Joe Biden wants to close the potential path of excuses for Netanyahu, putting him in the position of accepting an agreement that leads to the end of the war on the Gaza Strip.

But the framework in which America put forward Tel Aviv's ideas is based on the need to end the war and ensure a permanent ceasefire, which is in line with the demands of Hamas and contradicts the policy of the Netanyahu government.

Meanwhile, America's request to Hamas to accept this plan seemingly means throwing the ball in its court, but it is mostly aimed at facilitating Israel's acceptance of the plan in its American form.

Hamas's quick acceptance of Biden's words, despite reservations, is also aimed at understanding Netanyahu's complex dilemma with a view to deepening it and returning the ball to Israel.

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<sup>6</sup> Hamas accepts Qatar-mediated proposal on hostage release, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/hamas-accepts-qatar-mediated-proposal-on-hostage-release-israeli-withdrawal-from-gaza/articleshow/109903443.cms?from=mdr>

Last week, negotiations resumed, as an Israeli delegation was sent to negotiate with Hamas on the hostage release deal<sup>7</sup>. As US President Joe Biden has previously said, it is normal to negotiate the details of the above-mentioned plan, and in these negotiations, Hamas is likely to take into account the considerations expressed in response to the US President's words.

According to a senior Hamas source, the group accepted the US proposal to start talks regarding the release of Israeli hostages, including soldiers and civilians, within 16 days of the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement. However, a major gap remains regarding Article 14 of the ceasefire proposal, with Hamas insisting on obtaining written guarantees from mediators.

In its response to Israel last Wednesday, Hamas demanded that the phrase "make every effort" in the agreement be amended and replaced by the word "guarantee."<sup>8</sup>

According to information leaked to the media, the ceasefire could be extended for 42 days, and this is part of the first phase of the deal. But Hamas will not release soldiers and men under the age of 50 held by the group, which is part of the second phase of the proposed deal.

Hamas apparently wants to extend negotiations on the second phase without committing to release these detainees in the second phase<sup>9</sup>.

U.S. officials said President Joe Biden's administration had proposed a compromise that included the use of the word "pledge". The administration sees the word "pledge" as less binding than the word "guarantee" demanded by Hamas, but more binding than the phrase "make every effort."<sup>10</sup>

In any case, we must wait and see what happens in the coming days in light of the difficult humanitarian conditions experienced by the displaced Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

From another perspective, the opposing side (the occupying entity) is trying to pressure civilians by killing and displacing them. It targets hospitals and schools housing thousands of civilians with the aim of displacing them and forcing them to move south. It has continued to shell homes and civilian facilities continuously since the beginning of the war, committing massacres that have resulted in hundreds of deaths, mostly women and children.

Besides the war and the ongoing attack on the civilian population, the region is also suffering from a major crisis caused by the lack of entry of its basic needs of food, fuel and medicine.

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<sup>7</sup> Israel sends delegation to negotiate hostage release deal with Hamas .<https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/04/israel-sends-delegation-to-negotiate-hostage-release-deal-with-hamas.html>

<sup>8</sup> Gaza hostage-ceasefire deal talks hinge on Hamas demand for written commitments. <https://www.axios.com/2024/07/05/gaza-ceasefire-hostage-deal-hamas-israel-us-commitment>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

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