

New talks revive Israel-Hamas ceasefire prospects

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Efforts to broker a new ceasefire between Israel and Hamas have resumed, with Hamas indicating support for a mediator-backed proposal involving a 50-day truce in exchange for the release of five hostages. The draft deal, proposed by Egypt and Qatar, has been accepted by Hamas, according to senior leader Khalil al-Hayya. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office confirmed receiving the proposal and has submitted a counter-offer, developed in coordination with the United States. While details remain undisclosed, the truce could align with the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, which begins Sunday.

The renewed negotiations follow an escalation of violence, with Israeli forces launching a ground offensive in Rafah and intensified airstrikes after a previous ceasefire, which started on January 19, collapsed earlier this month. In the initial truce phase, Hamas freed 33 hostages, but an estimated 59 remain captive, though their status is unclear. Hamas had earlier demanded Israel's complete military withdrawal

from Gaza in exchange for hostages, but talks on a second phase of the deal never materialized. Instead, Israel and the U.S. proposed extending the expired ceasefire without guaranteeing an end to hostilities. Hamas rejected the extension, prompting Israel to resume military action on March 18.

Since then, more than 900 Palestinians have reportedly been killed in Israeli strikes, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry. Meanwhile, relatives of the remaining hostages have accused Netanyahu of endangering their loved ones by breaking the previous truce.

The war began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched an attack on southern Israel, killing approximately 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages. Israel's subsequent military campaign has killed over 50,000 people, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Post Date: March 30, 2025 PDF Created On: Tue, Dec 16 2025 08:06:48 am

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