

Netanyahu accuses Hamas of obstructing Gaza ceasefire talks, calls for increased pressure

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Israel's prime minister on Sunday accused Hamas of being an obstacle in negotiations for a Gaza ceasefire deal and called for more pressure on the Palestinian ahead of a new round of talks later this week. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comments came with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken set to arrive in Israel later on Sunday to push for a deal that could help avert a wider conflagration. "Hamas, up to this moment, remains obstinate. It did not even send a representative to the talks in Doha. Therefore, the pressure should be directed at Hamas and (Yahya) Sinwar, not at the Israeli government," Netanyahu said at a cabinet meeting, referring to the newly appointed Hamas chief. Western ally Jordan, hostage supporters protesting in Israel, and Hamas itself have called for pressure on Netanyahu in order that an agreement be reached. On Thursday, Hamas official Osama Hamdan told AFP the movement informed mediators it would

participate in the Doha talks, which took place Thursday and Friday, if they were “to set a timetable for the implementation” of what Hamas had already agreed to. Hamas also announced its opposition to what it called “new conditions” from Israel. Netanyahu, however, told cabinet that, “We are conducting negotiations and not a scenario in which we just give and give. There are things we can be flexible on and there are things that we cannot be flexible on, which we will insist on.” He said “enormous efforts” are being made to bring home the hostages. “We firmly stand by the principles we have set, which are essential for Israel’s security,” Netanyahu said, calling for “strong military pressure and strong diplomatic pressure” on Hamas to reach a deal. Making his ninth trip to the Middle East since the Gaza war began with Hamas’s October 7 attack on Israel, Blinken is due to meet Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders on Monday before truce talks resume in Cairo later in the week.