

## Netanyahu, Trump focus talks on Gaza hostages, ceasefire hopes



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WASHINGTON/GAZA, July 9, 2025 – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the primary focus of his recent meetings with U.S. President Donald Trump was the safe return of hostages held in Gaza, as Israel presses ahead with its military operations and international efforts toward a truce gain momentum.

In a statement shared on social media, Netanyahu also referenced what he called a “decisive outcome” in the recent military campaign against Iran, carried out jointly with the United States.

He reaffirmed that Israel’s mission in Gaza remains incomplete, stressing the need to dismantle Hamas and secure the release of remaining captives.

This visit marks Netanyahu’s third trip to Washington since January. In addition to Trump, he held talks with Vice President JD Vance and key congressional figures.

Steve Witkoff, Trump’s special envoy for the Middle East, said discussions were progressing and only one major obstacle remained before a temporary ceasefire could be finalized. He indicated the potential deal would include a 60-day pause in hostilities and the release of 10 living and nine deceased hostages.

Before Netanyahu’s arrival, senior White House officials met with a Qatari delegation engaged in backchannel mediation between Israel and Hamas.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian toll in Gaza continues to escalate. In areas like Khan Younis and Gaza City, civilians sifted through ruins of bombed-out homes, searching for loved ones. One grieving grandmother questioned the sincerity of truce efforts: “They speak of peace now after all this destruction?”

The war began with Hamas’ October 2023 incursion into Israel, resulting in 1,200 deaths and 251

kidnappings. Since then, over 57,000 Palestinians have been reported killed, and vast parts of Gaza lie in ruins.

Despite the devastation, Netanyahu voiced optimism about expanding regional normalization efforts through the Abraham Accords.