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US and allies push for Israel-Hamas ceasefire to be reached next week after presenting fresh proposal to warring sides

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International mediators are making an urgent push for Israel and Hamas to reach a ceasefire and hostage deal next week after [high-stakes negotiations](#) in Qatar saw them put a fresh proposal to the warring parties.

The “bridging proposal” presented on Friday was intended to close the remaining gaps of disagreement between both sides, a joint statement from the US, Qatar and Egypt said.

US President Joe Biden expressed optimism about the state of ceasefire and hostage release talks that are expected to resume in Cairo next week. “We are closer than we’ve ever been,” he said, adding that the talks had brought the chances of a deal “much, much closer than it was three days ago.”

The two days of discussions took place amid tensions across the region about a potential Iranian attack against Israel, which carries the risk of scuppering already fragile negotiations.

According to a diplomatic source close to negotiations, the talks were attended by CIA director Bill Burns, Mossad chief David Barnea, Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Jassim Al Thani and Egyptian intelligence head Abbas Kamel.

The statement said the proposal “builds on the areas of agreement over the past week,” and “bridges remaining gaps in a manner that allows for a swift implementation of the deal.”

Senior officials from the US, Qatar and Egypt will meet again in Cairo before the end of next week, “with the aim to “conclude the deal under the terms put forward” Friday, the statement said.

The talks were “serious and constructive,” the statement added, though it did not elaborate on what points of agreement were achieved over the past week.

Israel on Friday said it welcomed the mediators’ efforts but did not explicitly endorse the latest proposal on the table.

“Israel appreciates the efforts of the US and the mediators to dissuade Hamas from its refusal to a hostage release deal,” the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) said in a statement.

“Israel’s essential principles are well known to the mediators and the US, and Israel hopes that their pressure will lead Hamas to accept the May 27 principles, so that the details of the agreement can be implemented.”

Hamas has not rejected a hostage release deal, as the statement from the PMO suggested. On Thursday it reiterated its stance that there will be no hostage deal or ceasefire agreement without a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.

Hamas did not attend the talks but engaged separately with Qatari and Egyptian mediators, a source told CNN.

The death toll in Gaza since Israel launched its war against Hamas [reached 40,000 people](#) earlier this week, a bleak figure that underscores the desperation in the enclave for a reprieve from ten months of bloody conflict.

But discussions to bring about a pause have been shrouded in uncertainty since Israeli strikes in late July killed Hamas' former political leader and senior figures in Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

It is understood that both sides have failed to agree on the implementation of the finer details of the proposal.

A regional diplomat familiar with the negotiations told CNN that the continued sticking points for Hamas are Israel's restrictions on the movement of people from southern Gaza to the north, its demand for a veto over which Palestinian prisoners would be released, as well as its continued presence at the Philadelphi corridor and the Rafah border crossing with Egypt.

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