



JEHAD ALSHRAFI AP Photo

Israeli hostage Tal Shoham is escorted by Hamas fighters before being handed over to the Red Cross on Feb. 22 in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip. Israel has said its military campaign will continue until the remaining hostages are freed.

Hamas sets conditions to free hostages and end war

BY AMIRA EL-FEKKI
Newsweek World

Hamas has offered to release all hostages captured on Oct. 7, 2023, after the U.S. hostage envoy said the fighting would end immediately if they are all freed.

But Hamas also set demands including the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons and the withdrawal of Israel's troops from the strip, Gaza-based Hamas leader Khalil Al-Hayya said. The group has consistently said it will not disarm, making its terms unlikely to be acceptable to Israel.

Newsweek has reached out to the Israel Defense Force and the office of Prime Minister Benjamin's Netanyahu for comment.

The latest proposal from Hamas suggests a different course from previous hostage releases under temporary ceasefire ar-

rangements in which small groups of Israeli hostages - both death and alive - were handed back in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

President Donald Trump had demanded the release of all the remaining hostages in a warning to Hamas last month before supporting Israel's resumption of military airstrikes. The war in Gaza has devastated the territory since the Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023.

"The movement is ready to immediately begin negotiations on a comprehensive deal, under which all hostages held by the resistance would be released," the Gaza-based Hamas leader acting as the group's top negotiator, Khalil al-Hayya, said in a televised statement also broadcast on the group's Telegram channel.

The group's leader welcomed the stance taken by U.S. Hostage Envoy Adam Boehler that the fighting

would end if the hostages are released.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had held an assessment with his negotiating team and the heads of the security establishment and ordered the continuation of the steps to advance the release of hostages, according to a statement by his office on Thursday.

Al-Hayya demanded a complete end of the war and the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails according to an agreed-upon number, as well as the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and the lifting the blockade. Such terms were previously rejected by Israel.

Israel has said the military campaign will continue until the remaining hostages are freed. Israel also demands the demilitarization of Hamas, which the group has strongly opposed and refused to discuss.

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