

Leaders indicate Gaza truce is 'close'

Hope looms on horizon for return of hostages as truce could be reached soon

GAZA STRIP

HOPES mounted on Tuesday that Hamas could release dozens of hostages from war-torn Gaza after the militant group's leader and key mediator Qatar said a truce deal was in sight...

In Qatar, foreign ministry spokesman Majed Al-Ansari said "we're very optimistic, very hopeful" and told reporters: "We are at the closest point we ever had been in reaching an agreement."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed to destroy Hamas, told soldiers at a military base that "we are making progress" on the return of hostages.

There was no word on whether a vote would take place, and details of a deal were not released.

US President Joe Biden also signaled that a deal to free hostages and a temporary truce is "now very close."

"We are now very close, very close. We could bring some of these hostages home very soon. But I don't want to get into the details of things, because nothing is done until it's done," he said at the White House.

Speculation grew further when the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is often involved in prisoner exchanges and hostage releases, said on Monday that its president had met Hanijeh in Qatar.

In retaliation, Israel launched a relentless bombing campaign and ground offensive in the Gaza Strip. According to the Hamas government, the war has killed more than 13,000 people, thousands of them children.



Photographs of hostages taken after the Oct. 7 assault by Hamas, are displayed at a news conference | AP

Concern over seizure of ship by Houthis

The UN Secretary-General is following with "deep concern" reports of the seizure of an Israeli-linked vessel by the Houthis in the Red Sea that was reportedly en route between Turkey and India, a spokesperson said.

53 media workers killed in Israel

Fifty-three journalists and media workers have been killed in the latest war between Israel and Hamas, according to a tally by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) published Tuesday.

Xi pitches for international peace conference to resolve war in W Asia

BEIJING

CHINESE President Xi Jinping on Tuesday called for an "international peace conference" to resolve the conflict between Israel and Hamas, as he addressed a virtual summit of fellow BRICS leaders.

Israeli strikes kills 4 civilians in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Israeli bombardment of south Lebanon on Tuesday killed four civilians, including two journalists from Lebanon's Al-Mayadeen television in ongoing violence at the Lebanon-Israel border.

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