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Gaza Truce Efforts Lose Steam as Talks Face Major Obstacles

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Efforts to secure a United States-backed ceasefire in Gaza are losing momentum, as negotiations drag on without resolution and mutual distrust deepens. The proposed 60-day truce, intended to ease hostilities and set the stage for a lasting peace, has become entangled in political maneuvering and conflicting demands from both Israel and Hamas.

Israeli and Hamas representatives have been engaged in discussions in Doha since July 6, working with mediators from the United States, Qatar, and Egypt to finalize the framework. The plan envisions phased releases of hostages held by Hamas, the return of deceased Israelis, and a gradual withdrawal of Israeli Defense Forces from parts of Gaza. In exchange, Israel would free several Palestinian detainees. While the proposal was initially met with cautious optimism, negotiators have struggled to bridge gaps over critical issues such as territorial control and security guarantees.

Under the draft agreement, ten Israeli hostages would be released along with the remains of eighteen others over two months, with no ceremonial handovers. As part of a prior arrangement reached on May 19, humanitarian aid overseen by the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross would be allowed into Gaza in larger quantities to address mounting civilian needs.

One of the plan's most contentious elements is the creation of a so-called "humanitarian city" in southern Gaza, where approximately 600,000 civilians would be relocated under Israeli military oversight. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government argues this zone would offer protection to civilians, though critics contend it resembles a form of enforced segregation and could further undermine Gaza's governance. Hamas, for its part, rejects any arrangement that leaves Israeli forces in control of significant territory, pressing instead for a full return to the pre-conflict lines established before the May ceasefire.

Political considerations have also hampered progress. Two influential far-right ministers in Netanyahu's cabinet, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, have publicly condemned the ceasefire talks, demanding the total elimination of Hamas rather than concessions. Observers suggest Netanyahu may be deliberately delaying an agreement to maintain coalition support until Israel's Knesset, or parliament, recesses on July 27, making any government collapse more difficult to orchestrate during the break.

Hamas remains wary that Israel has no real intention of honoring a long-term truce, seeking stronger assurances that the temporary pause would be a genuine step toward ending the war rather than a tactical delay. While President Donald Trump has committed to backing the framework and mediators have pledged to oversee the process, confidence on both sides continues to erode.

Ultimately, the ceasefire talks illustrate how entrenched politics and mutual suspicion can overwhelm even well-structured proposals. With time slipping away and optimism in short supply, negotiators face an uphill battle to prevent further bloodshed and find common ground.