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Mediators Urge Hamas and Israel to Resume Gaza Talks to Prevent Escalation

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Mediators from the United States, Egypt, and Qatar are pressing Hamas and Israel to restart stalled negotiations to secure a ceasefire in Gaza. Both sides are urged to address remaining issues to finalize a deal.

The initiative, reported by Kan News, follows a joint statement from US President Joe Biden, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and Qatari Emir Tamim al-Thani, calling for talks to resume on August 15 in either Doha, Qatar, or Cairo, Egypt. The mediators emphasized that only minor details remain to implement a ceasefire and hostage release agreement, stating,

“There is no further time to waste, nor excuses from any party for further delay.” A senior US official, speaking anonymously to the Associated Press, said four or five points of contention, such as the timing of a hostage-detainee swap, still need resolution. Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office confirmed acceptance of the invitation to send a negotiation team.

The war, now in its tenth month, began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led militants killed approximately 1,200 people in Israel and took hostages. Israel’s subsequent offensive has resulted in thousands of deaths in Gaza, according to Palestinian health officials, and casualties in Israel from rocket fire and fighting, according to Israeli authorities. The assassination of Hamas’s political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, in Tehran on July 31 has drawn regional attention. Iran and Hezbollah have threatened retaliation. US officials believe Hamas, now led by Yahya Sinwar, can continue negotiations through other representatives, as noted by State Department spokesman Matthew Miller.

Critics of Netanyahu argue he has delayed talks, a charge his office denies, pointing instead to Hamas’s obstruction. Hamas has not yet responded to the latest call for talks, but has previously demanded a permanent ceasefire and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, conditions Israel rejects, insisting on dismantling Hamas’s military capabilities. The mediators have prepared a “bridging proposal” to address remaining disagreements, which include Israel’s insistence on maintaining a military presence in strategic Gaza areas like the Philadelphi Corridor, a demand Hamas opposes. A Palestinian official, speaking anonymously to Reuters, noted progress in narrowing gaps but cited Israel’s new condition of controlling a 1-kilometer border strip as a potential obstacle.

On August 8, Israeli strikes killed at least 23 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s health ministry, and there were casualties reported in Israel from continued rocket attacks. Posts on X reflect skepticism, with some users citing Hamas’s reluctance to negotiate and others noting Israel’s military actions as barriers to progress. The talks’ success depends on both sides’ willingness to compromise and secure the release of hostages.